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ABSTRACT

This doctoral study examined the literacy practices of two rural adolescents as they crossed between the social contexts of their rural community, Winnona Hill, and higher education. Data collected primarily through semi-structured e-mail interviews over a 4-year period indicated that both informants used multiple literacies and a range of language practices to become "literate enough" to gain access to college as well as to cross into life roles, careers, and possibilities beyond the rural community. Both informants' language practices shaped and were shaped by "ways of being" and dominant social constructions of social class, masculinity, femininity, Whiteness, and work. During the research period, Chris and Crystal used these language practices to negotiate the social, cultural, political, and intellectual worlds in and between their rural community and college. In sum, both informants learned to pose in order to "fit" into oppressive social structures in Winnona Hill. And yet these language and discourse practices did not necessarily support their "crossing" to higher education. In some instances, the coping mechanisms that they developed at home were counterproductive to their success in college. Implications for practice are that educators must offer rural adolescents access to "narratives of crossing"; model a range of language practices for and with rural adolescents; and engage in serious conversations about a continuum of expectations and related communication from the secondary to the postsecondary levels. (Contains 107 references) (TD)

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Multiple Literacies on Main Street and in the Academy: A Longitudinal Study of Two Working-Class, Rural Adolescents

By Laura Payne-Bourcy

B.S. Syracuse University, 1988

M.S. Syracuse University, 1993

Dissertation

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of English Education in the Graduate School of Syracuse University

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Wider Horizons

I first thought about the notion of "crossing" after reading an essay titled "How Mr. Dewey Decimal System Saved My Life," in High Tide in Tucson: Essays from now or never. In this essay, Kingsolver (1995) wrote,

> If there is a fatal notion on this earth, it's the notion that wider horizons will be fatal. Difficult, troublesome, scary – yes, all that. But the wounds, for a sturdy child, will not be mortal. When I read Doris Lessing at seventeen, I was shocked to wake up from my placid, color-blind coma into the racially segregated town I called my home. I saw I had been a fatuous participant in a horrible thing. I bit my nails to the quick, cast nets of rage over all I loved for a time, and quaked to think of all I had – still have – to learn. But if I hadn't made that reckoning, I would have lived a smaller, meaner life. The crossing is worth the storm (p. 52).

Knowing that Kingsolver grew up in a rural region of Eastern Kentucky, I read this notion of "crossing" as a socio-political reckoning and conflict between old and new understandings. Further readings around "border theory" (Giroux, 1993; McLaren, 1997; Michaelsen & Johnson, 1997) deepened my understanding of other questions and issues. I wondered how adolescents reconciled such cognitive dissonance and conflicting social constructions between their rural roots and their unfamiliar college lives. I also wondered what it meant for an adolescent to be what Kingsolver called a "sturdy child." What did it mean, for example, to be a sturdy language learner who could negotiate life in and between different discourse communities? How did adolescents experience the conflicts that Kingsolver noted as "difficult and scary," and what were the

implications for language learning in and outside of schools? The questions and issues that I raised from Kingsolver's passage shaped my initial questions for this study.

Longing to Stay Close to Home

In the third year of this study I considered yet another aspect of this notion of "crossing," posited by rural schools researchers, but also represented in another book that I discovered. In a book titled When I Was Young In the Mountains, Rylant (1982) wrote about her childhood in Appalachia and her socially-constructed understandings of other worlds beyond her mountain home. The last page of the book read, "When I was young in the mountains, I never wanted to go to the ocean, and I never wanted to go to the desert. I never wanted to go anywhere else in the world, for I was in the mountains. And that was always enough." Rylant's notion of "wanting" what was "beyond" and unknown was juxtaposed with a longing and need to stay in the rural community. In another book, titled Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds, Rylant (1991) wrote that the people of Appalachia,

> grew up more used to trees than sky and inside them had this feeling of mystery about the rest of the world they couldn't see because mountains came up so close to them and blocked their view like a person standing in a doorway. They weren't sure about going beyond these mountains, going until the land becomes flat or ocean, and so they stayed where they knew for sure how the sun would come up in the morning and set again in the night. Those who do go off, who find some way to become doctors or teachers, nearly always come back to the part of Appalachia where they grew up. They're never good at explaining why. Some will say they had brothers or sisters still here and they missed them. But most will shake their heads and have a look on their faces like the look you see on dogs who wander home after being lost for a couple weeks and who search out that corner of the yard they know they had to find again before they could get some good sleep (p.14).

I was curious about my informants' understandings of the phenomena that Kingsolver and Rylant described. Kingsolver wrote of the necessity to leave, in order to discover wider horizons, while Rylant wrote of the need to stay, finding comfort in a familiar social landscape. I found myself coming back to these two pieces of literature as "touchstone texts." While a movie might serve as a touchstone text in Neilsen's study, the Rylant and Kingsolver texts served as touchstones for me as a researcher, as I considered the problem that this study sought to address. I came back to the pieces as I struggled to understand and make sense of the data that my informants offered regarding their experiences in the different social worlds of high school and higher education.

As a former rural adolescent and teacher for nine years in an impoverished, rural school district, I wondered if and how rural adolescents might employ literacy practices in and out of school to negotiate the cognitive dissonance to which the touchstone texts and rural schools research alluded. I wondered too what kind of high school literacy curriculum might best prepare rural adolescents to transition from a rural high school to college in light of this dissonance. One finding of previous research was that rural adolescents are often forced to leave their rural community in order to embrace "wider horizons" (Theobald, 1997). Yet other researchers demonstrated that adolescents from rural communities have strong ties to home and family that often keep them in the rural community (Herzog, M. & Pittman, R. 1995).

This study was designed to describe the literacy practices used by two working-class rural adolescents between their senior years in high school and their senior years in college. Building upon the work of socio-cultural literacy studies, this study focused on the phenomena of "crossing" supported by research on rural schools. A search of previous literature revealed that the literacy learning of rural adolescents has been underrepresented in the research on adolescent literacy. This study focused on an important period in the lives of two rural adolescents, as they

sought transition from the language community of an impoverished rural region to a college setting. As policy makers and educators seek to understand how to increase the numbers of impoverished adolescents attending and completing four-year degree programs, the experiences of disadvantaged adolescents like the two informants represented in this study must be considered.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature related to this study. The first section reviews relevant research on rural schools, rural communities and rural students. The second section reviews research on language communities as well as relevant research in the field of higher education, focused on students' acclimation to college. The final section links the previous two fields of educational research to current research in literacy education.

Rural Schools

DeYoung (1993) has noted that 22% of America's schools are considered rural. Underrepresented in the literature and research, rural adolescents face a level of isolation, physical and otherwise, not encountered by their urban and suburban counterparts (Monk & Haller, 1988). Many studies on rural schools have focused on administrative issues particular to rural schools, such as school funding, staffing and school consolidation (Boone, 1998; Pugh, 1994; Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995; Sher, 1995). Recently, however, research on rural schools has focused on the cultural and political dimensions of rural communities and the "factory system" of schools that often reflects the values of the more dominant middle class society rather than the rural communities themselves (Theobald, 1997; De Young & Lawrence, 1996; De Young & Howley, 1996; Seal & Harmon, 1995).

As noted by Theobald (1997), conflict often occurs between rural communities and the secondary schools that essentially prepare rural adolescents for out-migration. Hektner (1995) has also noted this contradiction between the school system and the position of the home community; he concluded that for many rural adolescents moving "up" means "moving out." Bickel (1995) also noted the conflict of values between schools that prepared rural students to leave, and communities that attempted to keep them close to home and family.

De Young and Lawrence (1996) used the example of the Hollywood film Hoosiers to further illustrate this conflict. In this film, the secondary English teacher fought with the basketball coach to leave Jimmy [star athlete] alone so that he could concentrate on his academic pursuits. She fought to get Jimmy out of Hickory to prepare him for life beyond the cornfields and basketball courts. De Young and Lawrence (1996) used this example to illustrate the juxtaposition of rural educators and rural stakeholders, with the former promoting out-migration and the latter rewarding intense ties to community. In short, De Young & Lawrence (1996) theorized that rural communities paid for their children's education on at least two levels, they paid to raise and educate them, and then to lose them.

Other studies focused on rural students' career aspirations. In a survey of rural adolescents, Hektner (1995) found that strong ties to home and community complicated adolescents' career aspirations and future residential preferences. Rural youth who did leave their small towns and communities, often found themselves in conflict with a family and community that wanted to hold on to them (Theobald & Nachtigal, 1992). As Armstrong (1992) also noted, rural adolescents' identity construction was tied to their understandings of place. The adolescents in his study struggled to understand what career and educational paths might be open to them. For these adolescents, there was a conflict of narratives and potential "ways of being" (Gee 2000) between the middle class, school-sanctioned notion that higher education is the best path, as opposed to the rural value of staying close to home.

Further complicating the preparation of rural students for higher education are the economic issues faced by rural schools. Much work has been done in this area, including research conducted by The Children's Defense Fund. Such research has demonstrated that rural schools and their students suffer a number of important weaknesses, compared to schools across metropolitan America (De Young, 1987). De Young (1993) also noted that poor rural systems had difficulty

generating additional tax dollars, leading to significant inequities among schools, in the areas of technology, staff development and enrichment opportunities for students. Similarly, Sher (1995) noted that the cost of offering services and courses is typically higher in rural districts than in urban or suburban areas, when calculated on a per-student basis, due to differences in economies of scale.

Since the 1980s, studies by a number of rural schools researchers, including De Young (1996) and Howley (1999), have looked at the changing economic conditions in rural communities across the United States. A study by Davidson (1996) noted that the shift to a service economy from an agrarian and manufacturing economy continues to prove difficult for rural communities where displaced workers have few options. A study by Duncan (1999) also demonstrated that poverty persists in a number of rural communities, and that for decades, rural communities have supplied manufacturers with low-skill and low-wage labor. As "rural ghettoes" (Davidson, 1996) have become more common across America's landscape in the last two decades, Theobald (1997) has argued that the shift to a global economy did little except to legitimize the betrayal of rural communities by corporate America.

Beyond manufacturing losses in rural communities, Davidson (1996) has indicated that the policies and politics of big-time agribusiness have swallowed many of the small family farms. While the farm crisis of the past two decades was widely publicized in the Midwestern United States where Davidson's work was situated, other rural agrarian regions have suffered as well, including the general region where this study is situated. In 1978, there were 1,319 and 771 dairy farms in two upstate New York counties where this study is situated. In 1992, the most recent agricultural census available from Cornell's Cooperative Extension, there were 894 and 617 respectively in these two counties. Local research indicated then a decrease of nearly 32.2% and 20% respectively in the two counties over fourteen years.

Loss of Potential Life Worlds for Rural Adolescents

In the 1980s and 1990s, the opportunities for success in careers not requiring a college education changed dramatically in rural areas. Yet into the late 1990s, the percentages of students from some impoverished rural areas enrolling in college did not rise accordingly. The New York State Education Department has concluded that, out of sixty-two regions across New York State, including New York City, two rural counties have the lowest and 2nd lowest percentages of students who intend to enroll in college after high school graduation (New York State Report Cards, 1998-1999). As Howley (1997 & 1999) noted, even if rural adolescents wanted to participate in the rural life, the work and, hence, what he calls "lifeworlds," are disappearing. Many rural students are not enrolling in postsecondary education needed for successful careers and life possibilities beyond or within the rural community.

As Powers (1999) has noted in an article focused on national standards and literacy education in the United States, even rural children in Maine, who attained some of the highest reading scores in the country, were less likely to continue on to higher education than their urban and suburban counterparts. Similarly, De Young and Lawrence (1996), citing research on students in rural Maine, indicated that less than one quarter of the children studied made that crossing to higher education, despite the fact that Maine students have some of the highest early reading achievement scores in the United States. Thus, while many rural students in Maine ranked among the best in the country for academic performance in the elementary grades, these same students enrolled more frequently in courses that were not college preparatory than their suburban and urban counterparts (DeYoung & Lawrence, 1996). Not only were rural adolescents failing to enroll in college, they were also failing to enroll in secondary academic programs that would prepare them for college.

Howley (1997) has noted that rural adolescents have lower academic expectations and aspirations, regardless of their academic potential, due to the conflict between traditional middle-class notions of achievement and sense of place in their rural communities. Additional research has supported the notion that rural students have limited understandings of careers, educational requirements for various careers, and life possibilities beyond their rural surroundings (McCracken & Barcinas, 1991; Armstrong, 1992; Odell, 1989; Rojewski et al, 1995). Rural adolescents often covet what they see every day in terms of possible lives and career paths. Furthermore, what rural teenagers, and especially working-class teenagers, see every day in terms of these potential life narratives is limited in scope and not aligned with middle-class definitions of achievement (Haller, E. & Virkler, S., 1993).

Language Communities and Academic Achievement

While research on the literacy practices of working-class or poor rural adolescents is scarce, much work has been done to indicate that working-class adolescents in general are at risk for academic failure, as their literacies are outside of what Gee (2000) has called "achievement spaces." Poor children, regardless of race or geography, are typically considered "at-risk" for academic failure, as they and their families lack the cultural capital to negotiate middle-class discourse communities aligned with formal education and professional careers (Laureau, 1999; Rose, 1995). Poor rural adolescents face two challenges. First, their literacy practices are not aligned with middle class discourses. Second, due to economic changes, the life narratives previously open to them are disappearing.

Work in the area of sociology has noted the distinctions in working-class versus middle-class discourse communities. For instance, Rubin (1992) explained that working-class families often knew how to finance a furniture purchase, but did not know how to finance the education of their children. The latter involved knowledge and ways of using language with which they were

not familiar. Working-class parents did not consciously discourage their children from attending college, yet they did not know how to do and say that which would give their children access to and power within such social institutions (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). As Laureau (1989 & 1999) also noted, working-class parents felt disconnected from schools as organizations, whereas middle-class parents felt interconnected. The middle-class language of higher education was distinct from the language community of the working class (Luke, 1995).

Tinto (1993) investigated students' acclimation to higher education with respect to retention and attrition. Specifically, Tinto (1988) noted that dropping out from higher education was often related to a student's inability to become involved in the institution's ongoing social and intellectual life. Other researchers have explored this concept of institutional integration, examining the perspectives of "high-risk" students and their need for support systems to counterbalance initial disadvantages (Myers & Drevlow, 1982; Sullivan, 1997). Often, however, studies have revealed that college academic support systems only focus on academic issues facing incoming students (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995).

If Tinto's premise that dropping out of college is related to a student's inability to become involved in the institution's social and intellectual life, the intense ties that rural adolescents demonstrate to their home communities may present a real barrier to success for rural adolescents. One might theorize then that rural students would find Tinto's (1993) initial stage of separation especially difficult. In related research on working-class families, Rubin (1992) and Laureau (1999) have noted the inability of working-class students to break old ties and form new ties in college; their struggles are further complicated by the social and political struggles to function in two very different discourse communities. It would seem likely that working-class rural adolescents would face similar, if not additional struggles.

Thus, the gap between the world of the rural, working-class or poor adolescent and higher education may be much broader than that encountered by the middle-class adolescent. A number of rural schools researchers have noted that once rural students acclimate to the higher education setting, they perform equally as well academically as their suburban and urban counterparts (De Young & Lawrence, 1996; Pratt & Skaggs, 1989). More research is needed to understand how rural adolescents form and sustain social, political, cultural and intellectual ties in the process of "crossing" between their rural communities and the world of higher education.

Theoretical Framework for this Study

The purpose of this section is to review relevant research and explain the theoretical framework used to examine the literacy practices of informants in this study.

Multiple literacies. Luke (1995) has defined knowledge as that which is shaped by and shapes the social, cultural and political worlds of learners. Language learning, then, does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is impacted by and impacts upon the individual and institutional forces that affect adolescents' attempts to make sense of themselves and their lives through language. (1995/96) has suggested that the definition of adolescent literacy has changed considerably in the past decade, focusing most recently on adolescents' multiple ways of using language to acquire and demonstrate knowledge in and out of school settings.

Luke's work, along with other work from psychological, sociolinguistic, critical, feminist and poststructuralist perspectives, has pushed the definition of adolescent literacy from the cognitively oriented definitions of secondary reading to a concept of what Luke and others (Alvermann, 1998; Gee, 1996; Young, 2000) have called "multiple literacies." As noted by Luke and Elkins (2000), considering adolescent literacies in the twenty-first century "requires that we read and re/mediate the social relationships, the cultural knowledge, and the relationships of power

between adolescents and their social, biological and semiotic universes" (p. 398). A number of recent studies in literacy education have supported this assertion.

As Bruner noted in an address to the National Reading Conference (1999), children often learn to read as if decoding messages that are found in bottles. Without a sense of the human predicaments to be interpreted, comprehension is difficult. This study took the position that human predicaments are woven into the very fabric of comprehension and production of language in active, not passive, ways. Who gets to do the telling and who is listened to is every bit as important as the code that appears on a page or in a conversation. In order to read and write the word, adolescents must read and write their worlds in active and recursive ways (Freire, 1998).

As I considered the link between literacy practices and the social worlds of adolescents as noted in the literature, it seemed that an expanded definition of text was needed in this study. From a cognitive perspective, a "text" consists of symbols that an individual creates to convey an idea born of the individual's mind (Dillon and Moje, 1998). More recently, however, literacy researchers are pushing these definitions of "text" and challenging the field's understanding of what it is to teach literacy. For example, Alvermann (1998) has noted that adolescents possess multiple literacies, arguing that research and practice should move beyond the study of "textbooks, tasks and outcomes, as being apolitical or having universal applications" (p. xvii). The definition of "text" employed in this study stipulates that the construction and interpretation of texts are shaped by the social, cultural and institutional "voices" that learners hear (Dillon and Moje, 1998). These "voices" are essentially the dominant understandings of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and place represented in groups, organizations and institutions.

Furthermore, texts are everywhere and are formed from "ways of being" (Gee, 1996) that learners experience in different social and institutional settings. Along these lines, Phelps has noted:

> Adolescents can and do immerse themselves in literate activities that transcend adult-sanctioned themes, forms and limits. In addition to popular fiction, an expanded concept of "text" must also include film, CD-ROM, the Internet, popular music, television, magazines and newspapers, and adolescents' own cultural understandings (p. 2).

Similarly, Moje's study of the literacy practices of gang-related youth (2000) revealed that through non-mainstream practices such as graffiti, adolescents used these practices as "meaning-making, expressive and communicative tools" (p. 651). Literacy, then, is not defined in this study as a one-dimensional construct or strategy for encoding and decoding language. In this study, literacies are defined as a sets of language practices involved in negotiating the myriad social forces that shape language uses, language appropriateness and language fit in various and divergent settings. Thus, in the social and academic worlds of adolescents in high school and college, a "text" may be a conversation with a financial aide counselor, the dress patterns of sorority girls in the local clubs, a textbook chapter outlining Napoleon's regime, or speech offered at a party.

Critical literacies. Within the notion of "multiple literacies," researchers have explored the critical and political dimensions of literacy. In a study of adolescent boys, Young (2000) argued that critical literacy "involves an understanding of how social contexts and power relations work together in and through texts to produce unequal social practices" (p. 312). She concluded that by engaging adolescents in such practices, we may sensitize them to the ways in which unequal practices are represented in the ways we create and interpret language.

In another study of middle school girls, Finders (1997) explored what she called the "lifeworlds" of these adolescents as connected to their school-sanctioned and non-school-sanctioned literacy practices. Finders advocated for bringing a socio-cultural perspective of learning into the classroom in which students are given the opportunity to negotiate the pedagogy

with their classmates and teacher. Finders argued that by allowing students to shape their own learning, teachers can provide the "opportunity to rewrite cultural and social scripts" (p. 128).

Hynds (1997) studied the reading, writing, speaking and listening of five urban middle school students in the same English Language Arts classroom for a period of two years, concluding that literacy educators must adopt a stance of "critical constructivism." Since a classroom or curriculum cannot be apolitical, Hynds challenged teachers to examine "which students linger on the borders of our classroom" (p. 270). Such an examination would involve the development of what Hynds calls "a critical radar for detecting when males dominate the air time and our attention, for when females are pushed into being 'good girls,' and males are pushed into competitive macho roles" (p. 270). We may do this by developing a curriculum that balances student choice and engagement with language activities that allow students to explore how race, class and gender impact their lives. Such a stance would allow the field of literacy education to move beyond pedagogy focused on individuals, towards a pedagogy focused on achieving equity in the social worlds of adolescents.

This study was informed by work which positions the multiple literacies of adolescents as both "communicative and transformative in the sense that they were used to make and represent meaning, to change or construct identities, and to gain or maintain social positions in a particular social space" (Moje, 2000, p. 679).

Narrative theory and possible lives. This study was also informed by the relationships between studies focused on narrative theory and studies of literacy from anthropological or sociolinguistic perspectives. Narrative theory posits that learners structure past and future experience by way of language rehearsal; perceived reality is born of such language use (Bruner, 1988). According to Bruner (1988), biographical narratives are precursors for conceptualizing and then actualizing experiences. In imagining possible experiences beyond what is already known to

them, individuals construct and reconstruct biographical narratives as precursors to what Rose (1995) has called "possible lives."

It is known in the field of literacy research that race, class, gender and geography shape the literate behaviors and, presumably, the "possible lives" of individuals (Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983). For example, working-class or poor individuals, those living in rural areas or those from language- or cultural-minority backgrounds, often engage in language practices that run counter to the more middle- or upper-class discourse practices valued in school settings.

In an analysis of oral narratives, Gee (1989) demonstrated that certain narrative styles are more compatible than others with language learning in school contexts. Race and class, according to Gee (1992 & 1996), shape narrative construction and, hence, experiences in social, cultural and political venues. Similarly, Gee and Crawford (1998) concluded that the middle-class adolescents they studied felt more linguistically connected to what they called "achievement spaces" (Gee, 2000) such as those found in formal schooling.

Thus, this study is based upon the premise that language learning is something quite different from the development of decontextualized "skills" or bodies of knowledge to be mastered. By focusing on the social, cultural and geopolitical elements of literacy learning for and with adolescents, we may conceive of ways to support their learning while embracing who they are and where they come from. The narratives of the study participants were thus considered as not only precursors to lived experience, but also as possible avenues into present and future "ways of being."

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to offer an account of two adolescents' literacy practices during the four years spanning their senior years in high school to their senior years in college. Through the framework of multiple literacies, as well as the notion of "crossing" supported by

research on rural schools, the literacy practices of two rural adolescents were examined. As such, the study attempted to address two broad research questions: (a) What did it mean for these two informants to grow up in an impoverished, rural community and school and to become "literate enough" to go to college? (b) How did these teenagers develop and employ the multiple literacies necessary to cross into understandings, educational experiences, careers and life roles outside of the rural setting?

There has been considerable discussion about increasing the numbers of students and, in some instances, students from underrepresented populations, in higher education. This study focuses on the experiences and perspectives of an underrepresented population, both in terms of literacy research and research in the field of higher education. Rural adolescents constitute a significant proportion of our population. Changing economic conditions in rural communities necessitate postsecondary education in order to prepare young people for careers outside the farms and factories. Yet, rural adolescents are less likely to enroll in college or in secondary programs that prepare them for higher education than their suburban or, in some cases, their urban counterparts (DeYoung, 1996). Little understood are the literacy practices of rural adolescents in and between the discourse communities of home and higher education. Furthermore, little is known about how social constructions of race, class, gender and cultural background complicate the transition to higher education for rural adolescents. An understanding of these issues is important to educators, policy makers and researchers interested in preparing young people for life in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Design

Borrowing from the traditions of symbolic interactionism (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997), this study was designed to offer a longitudinal account of two adolescents' reported literacy practices, as well as their beliefs and perspectives related to their literacies in and outside of academic institutions. As Moje (2000) has noted, "People's practices and the meanings they make of them are shaped in various and sometimes contradictory ways as people interact with both the material and discursive world" (p. 657).

This study was designed to analyze the literacy practices of two rural adolescents as they crossed between social contexts of a community called Winnona Hill[1] and higher education. Like Moje's (2000) study of the alternative and unsanctioned literacy practices of gang-connected youth, this study was not designed to "claim to present the truth – or even stable patterns – of people's lives, but rather to understand the meanings that people make and to examine everyday lives in their complexity and contradictions" (p. 657). Case histories (Strauss, 1987) were used to focus on the stated experiences of specific informants, or the meaning attributed to specific places, practices or organizations. As Strauss (1987) explained, case histories provide a "readable and lively vehicle, full of vivid imagery, often in the actors' own words or in the on-the-spot words of the field observer – but can also provide that imagery in the context and service of a theoretical account of the descriptive materials" (p. 221). These case histories focused on the meaning that was attributed to the reading, writing, speaking and listening of these two young people during a specific time and set of experiences in their respective lives. The study considered the

[1] All names of informants, geographical locations, and educational institutions are pseudonyms.

intersectionality among race, class, gender, geographical location, language use and language learning in and out of formal school settings.

Issues of Design

As I started the study, previous research and my own experiences as a rural educator and former rural adolescent told me that notions of "crossing" were complicated, but I did not understand why or how they were complicated from the perspective of these two former students.

Having taught and coached both informants throughout high school, I had access to data from their old and new worlds via the informants themselves and artifacts that I routinely saved from all of my high school students. Both Chris and Crystal had been my students while I was an English teacher and coach at Winnona Hill High School. Both had contacted me via e-mail as they started their college careers at two different institutions. Our regular correspondence spanned a period of four years. At the beginning of the study, like my informants, I had recently crossed from Winnona Hill to the academy to pursue my doctorate. As such, I served as a link between their old and new worlds.

One of the limitations of selecting informants in this way was that it was difficult at times to know whom these informants were writing to in e-mails or speaking to in our interviews. Were they writing and speaking to me as their former teacher and coach? Were they writing to me as an advisor who might stop writing to them via e-mail if they did not participate in this study? Or were they writing and speaking to the larger research community that they knew, as a result of signing an informed consent form, would read their accounts? My relationship with these informants complicated this study. At the same time, the relationship that I had with these young people before the study began, and the relationships that developed as a result of this study, enhanced this study. Both offered descriptions of their experiences in and beyond Winnona Hill that might have been difficult for them to share with a stranger. A study of the literacy practices that they used to

negotiate between the worlds of Winnona Hill and higher education might then not have been possible if I had not also been positioned both inside and outside of the rural community and higher education. I was a link to their old and new worlds, and the rich and highly personal accounts that they offered indicated that they perceived I had some knowledge of both worlds.

This study must also be understood in the context of my own place in the rural, working class, as well as my position as a teacher and coach of rural adolescents, including the two individuals who participated in this study. To extricate my own experiences as a former working-class, rural adolescent, as well as an experienced educator, would be a futile attempt to avoid something that cannot be avoided. As Walkerdine (1997) has emphasized,

> If the rational and objective can be considered as produced at a price, itself replete with defenses, then rational, objective research becomes an impossible object. In other words, no matter how many methodological guarantees we attempt to provide to produce objectivity, we all know very well that the subjective intrudes, even in the most so-called rigorous research, despite many vigorous attempts to keep it at bay (p. 59).

In some respects, my positioning in this study was unusual, since I had developed a relationship that spanned nearly a decade with both informants. I first met Chris and Crystal as they were junior high school students in Winnona Hill. They were both college seniors as the study concluded. Fine (1992) has spoken to the issue of the researcher's responsibility in advocating for and with informants in qualitative studies such as this one. As someone who was not only a researcher, but a former teacher and confidante, it would have been impossible and even reprehensible for me to distance myself from these young people. To refuse to offer words of encouragement to adolescents struggling to adjust to life away from home would have been callous. To deny the fact that I sent these study participants an occasional care package or a hard cover book at the holidays would be dishonest. As a result of these and other considerations, I

declared myself a participant in this study, and kept track of my responses to the analysis as other researchers engaging in "local research" have done (Neilsen, 1998).

Also relevant to my positioning in this study was the issue of transferences and counter-transferences between researcher and informant. As Hunt (1989) has noted, transference describes the "unconscious archaic images that the subject imposes onto the person of the researcher" (p. 58). Counter-transference is the "researcher's unconscious reaction to the subject's transference" (p. 58). Such complex interactions shape the structure of the questions asked, the answers heard, and, ultimately, the data collected. While I may have had some impact on my informants' reactions to their new academic worlds, they correspondingly impacted upon my thinking about the new academic world that I found myself experiencing as well as my thinking about adolescents and their literary learning.

Thorne (1997) has noted that our positioning as qualitative researchers, as well as our memories and experiences, serve both to clarify and distort our analysis. For this study, my contextual understanding of these two students' high school experiences and the relationship that we developed over a period of years did certainly both clarify and distort my initial analysis. To work against such distortion, I shared my coding categories as well as emerging themes with both informants and a number of colleagues in my university setting. While my colleagues kept me grounded in terms of theory and methodology, my informants kept me from making sweeping generalizations or misinterpretations. For example, when I shared Chris' entire case history with him in our last interview in January of 2001, he told me that a piece of data was inaccurately used, in his opinion. While the original e-mail indicated that I had reported the conversation correctly, he was allowed to document his clarification.

In addition, I attempted to work against these problematic issues by asking the informants many clarifying questions, so as not to presume that I understood what they were writing or saying

to me. I shared data with colleagues early in the data gathering, and asked for their assistance in making sense of data as well as my emerging themes.

Thus the benefits of the design were that Chris and Crystal offered rich data, spanning four years focused on their literacy practices in and beyond Winnona Hill. At the same time, I had to work against the potential bias associated with my having a relationship with the informants, as well as some early preconceptions about their worlds, formed from my prior experience as their teacher.

Settings: Winnona Hill and Two State Higher Education Institutions

An hour's drive from the nearest metropolitan area, the Winnona Hill School District is located in rural New York State and covers a region of 270 square miles. Some students are bused 27 miles one way to a K-12 school that houses just over 1,100 students. Winnona Hill is impoverished by most accounts, with a per pupil expenditure that historically ranks in the bottom 10% in New York State (New York State Report Card – 1998). After the loss of the community's major manufacturing employer in 1992, during the time that my two informants were students there, Winnona Hill's per pupil expenditure plummeted to the bottom 1% of all schools in New York State.

My interest in the struggles of rural students can be traced to my reading of Kozol's (1991) Savage Inequalities during my nine-year career as an English teacher and coach at Winnona Hill High School. Kozol wrote that the kind of inequalities he observed among children of color would not happen to White children. While I knew that many more children of color were living in poverty across the United States as compared to White children, I also knew that my students demonstrated high need in a school that had limited resources. Each day I saw students in Winnona Hill go without the most basic of educational tools and opportunities. Computers, field trips, elective courses in the arts and humanities, foreign language instruction in junior high

school, and even safe equipment with which to conduct science experiments were not available to the children and adolescents of this region. I was privileged during this time, however, to work with a talented and committed cohort of teachers who struggled to maintain high standards for poor children and adolescents within structures at the local and state levels that indicated little concern for the education of these young people.

Until 1997, New York State schools operated with two distinct academic tracks. A "Regents" diploma indicated that a student had successfully completed sequences of discipline-specific study and passed corresponding high-stakes assessments. Students who did not opt for this Regents track could earn what was called a "non-Regents" high school diploma by taking courses that were not linked to the state assessments. Every June in New York State, Regents students assembled in gymnasiums, cafeterias and classrooms to engage in the three-hour examinations. The Regents track was considered the "academic" track while the non-Regents track was considered "vocational." From 1995 to 1997, Winnona Hill had the lowest percentage of Regents graduates (26%) in a five-county region of New York State.

During the same time period, however, an average of 75% of our English 11 students, including students with special needs, passed the grade 11 Regents with a score of 65 or better. It was possible for a student to pass the course despite failing the examination, although this was unlikely if a student received less than a 55 on the examination. Our passing rate left me confused. The English Regents itself was not the cause for Winnona Hill's low percentage of Regents diplomas (26%). If nearly 75% passed the English Regents, but only 26% received Regents diplomas, these young people failed to enroll in or receive credits in other required Regents courses. And the dismal Regents diploma rate still did not account for the students who left high school altogether.

In addition, those who did graduate with Regents diplomas often opted not to go on to college or left college and returned home shortly after enrolling. Most of Winnona Hill's students were "literate" according to their performance in English class and based upon a statewide English assessment. Why, then, did my former students show up at the Friday night basketball games consistently when they could have been in college? What was this system of high-stakes testing not accounting for? Would the one-track system that was said to be looming on the horizon make a difference—positive or negative—for my students? Would a curriculum driven by high-stakes testing better prepare adolescents for a range of life possibilities both in and beyond Winnona Hill?

As did the few Winnona Hill students who went on to college, the informants represented in this study enrolled in state colleges or universities. Chris attended a four-year public college located in a rural region of New York State. The college offered a variety of undergraduate programs within three principal divisions of liberal arts and science, business, and professional studies and had a total undergraduate enrollment of 5,400 students. Each fall, approximately 900 freshman and 600 transfers enrolled in this state college. Based upon admissions information offered by the college, applicants were recommended to have a solid, college-preparatory background in high school, an academic average of "B" or better and a combined SAT score of 1,000 or better. 94% of the students on this campus were from New York State, and only 9% identified themselves as having an ethnicity other than White. 57% of the student body was female and 43% male.

Crystal attended a public, urban university in which 98% of the freshmen ranked in the top 2/5 of their high school senior classes and had an average combined SAT score of 1,161 for the fall semester of 1998. According to the university's publicity materials, the institution ranked seventh in research and scholarship among the nation's top public universities and boasted a

graduation rate of 67%, which was more than 20% higher than the national average in 1998. With over 10,000 full-time undergraduates, the university characterized its student population as "diverse" with 62% of the students identifying themselves as Caucasian, 9% as African American, 7% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 6% as Hispanic, 1% as Foreign, .2% as American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 15% as Unknown. Of the population in this state university, 52% was male and 48% was female.

Participants: Chris and Crystal

The selection of these two informants was purposeful (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Both informants were my students at Winnona Hill High School at different grade points in their academic careers between grades 7-12. Chris and Crystal were strong students in English Language Arts, achieving grades above 90% on the New York State English Regents examination as high school juniors. As seniors in high school, both took English 101, a course that I taught with permission from the local community college as a steppingstone to higher education. Both identified themselves as working class, and both were the first generation in their respective families to attend college. They also participated on the cross-country and track and field teams that I coached for four or more years.

In the fall of 1997, Chris and Crystal, along with several other former students, contacted me via e-mail, seeking me as an advisor, confidante and electronic pen pal. At the time, I was on leave from my high school position and enrolled in a full-time doctoral program. In a sense, we had all left the insulation of the rural school and community in pursuit of higher education. We began a correspondence that lasted for four years.

As noted by Creswell (1998), cases are often selected to "show different perspectives on the problem, process or event" (p. 62). While both of these adolescents identified themselves as working class, Chris' rural, working-class experiences were quite different from Crystal's and vice

versa. As Rubin (1992) and Walkerdine (1990) have also noted, there are layers and clear distinctions within social classes, which are in turn shaped by other factors such as race, gender and geography. One of the distinctions that I noted early in the analysis and data gathering was that each informant experienced a different working-class upbringing. As a White female from what Rubin (1992) would have likely characterized as a "hard-living" working-class family, Crystal's experiences were different from those of Chris. She served as a maternal figure to her younger sister in a single parent family in which the father was seasonally employed. Chris was a White male, who grew up in a stable nuclear family with a stay-at-home mother and a stoic father who worked in a local paper mill. His family reflected Rubin's (1992) characterization of "settled-living" working class (p. 30). Yet this study did not attempt to position these informants as typical of students in Winnona Hill or any rural school or any particular definition of working class. These two informants' perspectives represented a complexity of experience found in what some would incorrectly characterize as a rather homogeneous, rural population.

There were other reasons that I selected these two informants. Chris and Crystal were members of a class of students at Winnona Hill that was especially talented academically. As this group of students came through high school, my colleagues often referred to them as a "bubble" class. More than 50% of this class received Regents diplomas and a high number of these students enrolled in four-year colleges and universities. Among this group, Chris and Crystal were two of the strongest English students in the class, receiving a 93 and 94 on the 11th grade English Regents respectively.

I chose to focus on Chris and Crystal in large part because they were two adolescents who should have "crossed" successfully, but struggled, as evidenced by their early e-mails to me. They were adolescents who were successful in a school setting, based upon traditional means of assessment, but struggled to acclimate to the academy. Focusing on their reported experiences

allowed me to offer a longitudinal account of their literacies in and beyond Winnona Hill. Interestingly, both informants declared themselves to be "English" majors over the time period of this study, and both struggled to imagine possible careers or academic paths aligned with this course of study.

Finally, both of these informants were highly committed to my research. Both responded to questions that I posed consistently and thoroughly. I collected similar amounts of data from each individual. Chris and Crystal appeared to be sincerely interested in the questions that I posed and, in a sense, in constructing their own narratives of "crossing." A limitation of selecting informants with whom I had a previous relationship was that they may have told me what they perceived I wanted to hear. On the other hand, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the relationships that I had with these young people may have allowed me access to data that a more distanced perspective might not have yielded.

Data Collection

I began semi-structured interviews via e-mail with these two informants in the early winter of 1998. Since both had previously contacted me by way of e-mail, this seemed like a logical vehicle to gather data from informants who were hundreds of miles apart from each other and me. In keeping with Bodgan and Biklen's (1997) notion of the "funnel" approach to case study development, I kept the focus of the semi-structured interviews broad and open-ended, allowing questions to emerge through cyber conversations over a period of weeks and months. At first, my e-mail interactions with the participants were semi-structured, but the process became more focused as recurring trends emerged in my interactions with study participants and reviews of other artifacts. As suggested by Creswell (1998), data collection was extensive, "drawing on multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, documents and audiovisual materials" (p. 62).

Archival data were saved from September 1996 to June 1997 as a normal part of course requirements for the English 101 course that I taught in Winnona Hill and which both informants took. I did not save these writing samples as a part of the study, but as a normal part of classroom procedures for any class that I taught. English 101 was a standard freshman composition course that utilized a text of essays focused on current social and political struggles in the United States and abroad. These texts were used as springboards to writing and discussion. As a part of the course requirements, students completed a series of two five-page essays, an eight-to-ten page research paper, a journal and a series of smaller writing assignments designed to tease out grammatical issues that were then addressed in mini-lessons. The syllabus was determined by the community college, as the students were receiving college credit for the course. As the instructor, I had little control over the content of the course. With both informants taking English 101, however, I had access to a semester's worth of writing samples, including journals, papers and assorted drafts.

E-mail interviews over the course of the four years were, however, the primary data source for this study. Collection of data via e-mail, albeit a relatively new technique, lends itself well to a constant comparative approach (Glaser, 1992). While one of the limitations of using this technique for interviews is that the e-mail "talk" is sometimes terse, and leaves room for interpretation, the ability to ask clarifying questions after reviewing initial transcripts can be a tremendous strength of the method as data gathering and analysis are ongoing.

In addition, our e-mail interviews were suspended, as if caught somewhere in time and space. Often, the two informants did not respond to whole questions or even parts of questions, but would come back to them days or weeks later after rescanning the e-mail text. Chris did this consistently, since he had not mastered how to reply without adding onto old messages, necessitating a great deal of scrolling for both him and me. As he scrolled, however, he would

recall and reflect upon earlier conversations and often add to his initial response or add comments to an earlier discussion. The interviews became recursive, and the data gathering technique offered both informants and me the opportunity for language rehearsal as well as simultaneous clarification, spontaneity and reflection. The recursive nature of e-mail interviews again lends itself well to a constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with data gathering and analysis going on simultaneously.

Data collected through e-mail interactions were juxtaposed with secondary data sources, including transcripts from phone and face-to-face interviews, web pages that the informants directed me to, journals and written artifacts. E-mail was important to this study in that it allowed me almost daily contact with my informants during certain periods of the study. As Chris once noted, I had access to his "dilemmas and joys." E-mail afforded Chris, Crystal and me a level of contact that would otherwise not have been possible.

At the same time, e-mail allowed for a level of privacy. Neither informant was compelled to respond to my inquiries. They could ignore or delete a message if they chose to do so. At a keyboard hundreds of miles apart, they controlled their level of participation in this study. A longitudinal study of this nature with informants spread across a wide geographical area would be nearly impossible without e-mail as a data gathering technique. The data were rich, capturing the everyday experiences and perspectives as well as "hot spots," (Fine & Weis, 1998) which emerged during their four years of college. With archival data, interview transcripts, e-mails pasted into field notes and analytical memos, as well as artifacts gathered over four years, I had more than a thousand pages of data kept in three one-inch three-ring binders.

Data Analysis

Using a constant comparative method of analysis (Creswell, 1998), the case histories were constructed by analyzing the reading, writing, speaking and listening of two rural adolescents

before and after they crossed from a rural high school to higher education. The case histories (Strauss, 1987) were constructed through a content analysis of extensive e-mail, face-to-face and phone interviews, and other artifacts. The data represented a range of literacy practices during the four-year period between each informant's senior year in high school and their senior year in college. This period was a pivotal time for these adolescents as they "crossed" between their rural communities and the academy.

The data-gathering scheme for this study was simultaneous and ongoing from the beginning, as is often recommended with regard to conducting inductive qualitative inquiry (Strauss, 1987). Data analysis became more explicit and systematic as the data collection progressed over time. Open coding allowed me to form "initial categories of data with respect to the phenomenon under investigation by segmenting information" (Creswell, 1998, p. 57). As properties or subcategories emerged, the back and forth e-mail interactions and ongoing analysis helped me build upon previous interactions with study participants, allowing for the collection of data that spoke to the reiteration of themes over time (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997).

I coded the early data with color-coded "post it" notes marking the kinds of "crossings" I thought the informants were making (Giroux, 1993). Issues of race, class, gender, relationships with significant adults and power in and outside of Winnona Hill emerged. Through e-mail correspondence, I was able to collect data that provided many incidents of the emerging categories of focus. Subsequent analysis revealed the diversity of the dimensions within the categories. At the same time, I wrote more than thirty analytical memos about what I saw emerging and about my own perspective as a participant in the study and former teacher in Winnona Hill. This writing, along with many conversations with colleagues and advisors about my study and my data, allowed me to come to a point, over a period of three years, where I could more thoroughly examine the crossing metaphor. At times it held up, at times it did not.

Clarification via member checks (Lincoln, 1985) occurred in both case histories, as typologies of codes were developed. These typologies were based on the recurring phrases, words and ways of thinking that surfaced during multiple readings of the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Using a word processing program, an electronic file was created for each category of information, putting participants' words as well as descriptions of their literacy practices and artifacts into each category file as appropriate. By identifying the links that existed among the subcategories of data through the use of a constant comparative approach, superordinate categories were identified (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A word processing program was used again to re-sort the subcategories of data into files that were named for each central category.

It was through asking clarifying questions in an almost ping-pong like manner, writing analytical memos and engaging in conversations about my study, that I came to examine my metaphor of crossing. Initially, the use of the metaphor was a top-down analysis. Analyzing both the metaphor and the initial themes that I found threaded through the data allowed me to ground my interpretations.

I worked with the categories of data that over time formed subcategories that could be represented by "process codes." According to Bodgan and Biklen (1997), process codes refer to coding words and phrases that facilitate categorizing sequences of events, changes over time, or passages from one kind of status to another. In order to use a process code, the researcher must view a person, group, organization or activity over time and perceive change occurring in a sequence of at least two parts (p. 168).

Process codes were hence used to frame the case histories in terms of literacy practices in social and academic settings in Winnona Hill and beyond. I engaged in sampling, coding and analytical writing as the analysis focused on the core categories. Finally, I shared coding, samples of their data, and drafts of the case histories with the two informants in face-to-face and phone

interviews in their junior or senior years of college. It should be clarified that process codes generally imply stages. While these codes, in some respects, indicated a stage-like progression, it was not that simple. This was also not a true example of what Bodgan and Biklen (1997) referred to as a "situation analysis." The experiences of these adolescents and the codes that categorize such experiences are overlapped and intertwined. While the themes hold the two cases together, how and when they were operationalized in the case histories varied.

The use of multiple data sources and member checks served to clarify meaning by identifying the different ways in which the phenomenon were seen. As the data categories further dimensionalized, or showed the "extreme possibilities on a continuum" (Creswell, 1998, p. 57), I asked the study participants to engage in member checks. Member checks (Lincoln, 1985) were conducted by way of e-mail, phone and face-to-face interviews, by sharing coding and samples of data. Considered by Lincoln (1985) to be "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314), member checks allowed me the opportunity to share data and analyses with the study participants and to determine the accuracy of my account. Member checks also helped further refine and validate my coding categories in this study. The themes or categories of focus that emerged offered insights into how study participants thought about their literacy-related experiences in educational and social settings.

This study grew from my goal to describe the literacy practices employed by these young people during this important part of their lives. I did not want to construct "life narratives spiked only with the hot spots… like surfing our data for sex and violence" (Fine & Weis, 1998, p. 274). At the same time, I struggled with the presumption that I might speak for these two young people (Alcoff, 1991/92). I knew them, and telling a story about people with whom you share a history of sorts is less than simple. I considered the data saturated and stopped collecting data in January 2001, when the informants repeated examples that had been offered earlier (Bogdan & Biklen,

1997), and when the informants told me that the coding categories and data samples accurately reflected their experiences.

CHAPTER IV

Chris: Multiple Literacies Within and Beyor d Winnona Hill

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the multiple literacies that shaped and were shaped by ways of being and dominant social constructions of masculinity, Whiteness and work for an informant called Chris. The chapter begins with an overview of what I thought I knew about this adolescent's literacy practices from my interactions with him as a teacher and coach in Winnona Hill. The chapter then explores the range of literacy practices that Chris reported engaging in from early to late adolescence in order to negotiate the social, cultural and political worlds within Winnona Hill, as he worked to be "literate enough" to cross to higher education. Some of these practices were public and known to me, while others were private and completely outside of the school curriculum. Finally, the chapter explores the language practices that Chris employed in his higher education settings to negotiate the academic, social and cultural expectations in college as well as the world in Winnona Hill to which he was still tied.

A Teacher's View: Dotted Lines and Half an Opus

In the spring of Chris' eighth-grade year, I recalled standing in front of my English classroom, obnoxiously soliciting unsuspecting adolescents to sign up for the fall cross- country season. I pointed to the list of names adorning my bulletin board and cajoled Chris and his friend to sign on the dotted line. This waif-like child with glorious elf ears and a mischievous smile looked at me with disbelief and disdain. Yet later that day, I saw the name Chris Erikson scrawled neatly on one of my dotted lines. The following fall, during his first cross-country race, Chris waved at cars traveling on a road adjacent to the course and muttered Russian phrases that he said he was learning from language tapes.

As a student in my freshman English class that same year, Chris spent his class time working on a novel that he called The Magnum Opus. He labored over the piece for the entire

year, refusing to engage in the sustained silent-reading component of my reading and writing workshop. With this instructional format, my students were invited to choose their own novels, ranging from young adult literature to more classic pieces associated with a standard canon. We engaged in this independent reading for the first ten minutes of the forty-minute class period and out of class in the form of homework. My students were then required to engage in a writing opportunity that reflected their personal response to the piece of literature, with options ranging from opportunities to replicate, connect to and extend the text. This program was based upon work by Hynds (1994), and allowed a variety of forms for student response, including a "create your own" opportunity. Despite my perception that this part of the curriculum was student-driven, Chris was not interested in my menu or in a public form of self-selected reading. He informed me politely, but pointedly, "I read at home."

Two years later, during the statewide English Regents examination for high school juniors, I sensed Chris' frustration with the paper and pencil task: ten listening comprehension questions, twenty multiple choice vocabulary questions, twenty reading comprehension questions and two formula essays. I encouraged him to "play the game" and complete the tasks. Despite his frustration, he refrained from writing parodies and achieved one of the highest grades in his section.

I often remarked to colleagues that I learned more about an adolescent's literacy practices by watching and listening to him or her interacting in social settings than in classrooms where 150 other students vied for my attention in any eight-period day. This was certainly true with Chris. For four years, I was fortunate to teach, coach and mentor him. Early in his experiences on my cross-country team, Chris was quiet and reserved. He sat with the same friend with whom he signed on the dotted line and attentively listened to the joyful banter that characterized our long trips to competitions.

It would be difficult to capture the wonderful chaos of those trips, legs and duffel bags spilling into the bus aisle, laughter, smiling faces and words flying like balls in a juggler's hands. Chris slowly negotiated his way to being the center of attention on these trips. By his junior season, he was considered a fixture, and the younger athletes looked to him to entertain with stories and animated gestures. Declared "Lord Erikson" by the younger athletes, at meets Chris sported a Vietnam-era khaki hat adorned with a long turkey feather. It was typical of him to wave at spectators, hug a hill after a victory or, if passed during a race, to yell a Russian phrase that he claimed meant "never again."

Over the course of his high school career, teachers considered Chris exceptionally intelligent, immature, undisciplined and even unruly. I remembered discussions in the teacher's room about his belligerence and foul mouth. When I spoke to him about the use of the "f" word in the fall of his senior year, he informed me that the "f" word "means nothing. "It's language garnish. Like a piece of wilting lettuce on a sandwich."

In the spring of Chris' senior year, I started towing a book of essays by Aristotle, Nietzsche and other philosophers to my large study hall where Chris and 50 other students were detained with me each seventh period. I frantically grabbed it from the school library, desperate for a way to keep Chris busy, focused and thinking. If I did not do that or, at the minimum, let him take attendance, he could turn a rather docile study hall into pure mayhem. I remembered one day in particular, when he and another student took a guitar and made up a song about the plot of Romeo and Juliet that we later recorded on the school's phone-in homework line using a cellular phone. The two high school seniors wrote the tune as a review tool for my ninth-grade English students. Thinking of it years later still made me smile as I remembered their irreverent manipulation of the Shakespearean classic.

Despite the hysteria that Chris loved to create, he was guarded about some of his literacy practices. I became aware of some of these "hidden" language practices, or what I have since called his "underground" language practices, watching him write his Opus in ninth grade. He showed me parts of the text, but made it clear that he had no intention of sharing the entire document with me. He teased me, as the nosy English teacher, with hints that he had other writings at home, too. Despite what I may have naïvely thought, Chris made it clear that he did not need my encouragement or approval in any way to continue writing and growing as a writer. Like Finders' (1997) description of a sixth-grade girl who kept hidden her baseball books because girls do not read baseball books, I suspected that even as a ninth-grade student, Chris kept many of his literacy practices hidden from the view of school personnel, including me.

During Chris' senior year in high school, I taught an English 101 course via a local community college that was supposed to serve as a springboard for our high school students to higher education. Chris sat quietly in this period section and seldom spoke. He could entertain the troops in study hall. Yet he was not comfortable sharing his writing in an academic context. Despite the fact that Chris' words jumped off the page at me, his primary audience, he seldom shared his pieces with other students—at least that I was aware of. He scorned peer revision processes and professed that he never revised. At least in his public persona, Chris was a "first draft as the final draft" kind of guy.

Early Identity Construction: Family and Place in Childhood

The purpose of this section is to examine Chris' early literacy practices and what practices he perceived led him to be "literate enough" to attend college. To understand Chris' early literacies, I asked him many questions about his early literacy practices. As De Young and Lawrence (1996) have noted, many rural children have a small network of family and friends. This

was the case for Chris whose social network was tight, and in our discussions he spoke almost exclusively about his home literacy practices versus school. Also consistent with research on family literacy, his mother was a prominent figure in his early literacy development. Yet other family members, and even his physical surroundings, shaped his understandings of the form and function of his literacy practices (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Chris learned early that he could craft stories and access information or narratives about people and lives that were quite different from what he experienced on his country road between two small hamlets. Being literate opened up entire worlds and ways of being to Chris. In this slow and deliberate rural world, words filled his mind and the pages of notebooks that would shape his understandings of his identities and related behaviors.

Early in my conversations with him, Chris distinguished his language practices from what he believed was typical of other males he knew in Winnona Hill. In reflecting on this understanding, Chris wrote to me by e-mail during his freshman year of college,

> I remember sitting on a gigantic round hay bale near twilight in October. I was on a hill next to the dead cornfield in the wind with a stick in my hand and a grass-stained sweatshirt. I could still imagine then. I tried to write stories and they never started as a simple story. They began with intentions of filling a whole notebook. Or it could have been the end of the day I fought stump trolls in the beaver pond, or the same night I cried in the pine trees because I felt lonely. I don't think many other boys did that. Imagination. I used to walk along the stone wall, pretending I was with a girl. But again, I think that's pretty strange now. Being cut out of social interaction forced me to provide other means of coping. To do, that I looked inside, paper and pen, and maybe colored pencils.

Based on his account, Chris used his reading, writing, speaking and listening to make sense of his relationship in the social world of Winnona Hill, looking inside as well as outside, to

conceive of worlds beyond what he saw every day. And while he suspected that the isolation of the rural setting forced him to engage in literacy practices not employed by other children his age, even as a fourth grader, Chris used these language practices to piece together narratives of possible lives, both in and beyond his immediate surroundings.

In particular, Chris noted the role of family members in shaping his understandings of other social worlds via young adult books, and borrowed college texts. His favorite book from third to sixth grade was Elizabeth Winthrop's (1986) Castle in the Attic; and he read it religiously at the same season of the year he first encountered it. He did the same with Flowers for Algernon (Keyes, 1984), always finishing it each year on Christmas Eve. He also recalled a textbook entirely composed of first-person accounts of history, given to him by his older sister, then in college. "That education," as he wrote of it via e-mail, "flavored my impressions of other people until college." Chris' limited notions of people different from him in terms of race, ethnicity and religion were reinforced by this tight family network and limited range of experiences.

As a college sophomore, Chris wrote to me, "Everything was family and home. Community was nonexistent on my road except for the elderly farmers next door." His memories were of the red carpet in his living room, his sister's purple and pink hairbrushes that littered the bathroom sink, and the hilly forest behind his house. He spent time on his uncle's dairy farm in the summer months, climbing and working among golden bales of hay and feeling brilliant in the twilight after a long day's work. In going back and forth between e-mail, transcripts and archival documents, I found this sketch and a brief description in Chris' journal from English 101 (see Figure 1). Using the journal, he reflected fondly on his practice of sitting and watching the hay fields.

Very early in this study, I was forced to think more deeply about Chris' literate life outside of what I knew as an educator or researcher. Chris' literacy practices allowed him to consider what

it meant to be a male growing up in a rural region, where his developing literacies were, as he understood them, different from the literacy practices exhibited by other males in that place and time. In turn, Chris made frequent references to his mother who was a model for his writing, especially poetry. His mother's poetry was often religious in subject. Also like much of Chris' writing, her poetry was mostly private. Only when she needed to defend herself did she go public with her pieces. Of one such experience, Chris wrote,

> At the new church, Mom's reasoning on religion, practically like a new denomination, went against their teachings. Mom is very clever as far as religion is concerned, and I still believe her understandings and interpretations to be true. Her theology resulted in threatening phone calls and a couple pieces of hate mail. Mom retaliated with brilliant poetry that undermined their teachings submitted to the church newsletter. We were essentially excommunicated, and now I think organized religion is a mockery of humanity. It's left over from the Renaissance and irrelevant today. Fellowship can be found other places. Sorting it out now makes me angry at the homemade dress wearing, closed-minded simpletons that graced the pews.

Chris understood through his relationship with his mother that literacy practices are often private. At the same time, he understood the power of words to protect, to make a point, and to undermine oppression. Like his mother's writings, many of Chris' writings were not intended for an audience other than the author. His primary purpose was to capture on paper his thoughts and feelings or to "look inside." It became clear to me that in these private spaces, these moments of looking inside to consider who he was in the social world of family and community, "identity work" was accomplished (Gee, 2000). That was not to say that he did not take any of his literacy practices public. What was clear, however, was that much of what Chris perceived to be his most important language practices were private and out of the view of school personnel and outside of

the school curriculum. What was also clear was that Chris' mother was a model for these private language practices.

And yet Chris' mother was not the only family member who supported Chris' literacy development. In reflecting on his early writing, Chris told me about stories he wrote in small pocket notebooks. Some of his favorite characters that he created were Hoppalong Kitty and Samurai Cat, whose journeys almost always involved some aspect of what he called "the monster genre." He recalled finding these pocket notebooks hidden in the bottom of his father's "secret drawer," pinned under his (father's) private mementos. He wrote late in his sophomore year of college, "I didn't dare extract them, I haven't seen them since a snowy day before Christmas break in fourth grade." Despite the fact that Chris never saw or discussed those stories with his father, he knew that his father considered them keepsakes.

In conclusion, Chris' close family members shaped his reading, writing, listening and speaking in complex and intricate ways. Two years into this study, I also realized how ignorant I was as a classroom teacher to what this adolescent knew and could do. Family and place, his physical surroundings, shaped his early literacy practices and identity. His sisters gave him access to texts and knowledge of the world that lay beyond the narrow country road that meandered in front of his home. His mother showed him how to go public with his literacies when he needed to stand his ground or fight oppression. His father kept his stories locked in a drawer like cherished photographs, which if nothing else told Chris that his father considered those stories important enough to save like photographs. Those photographs, snapshots of Chris as a language learner, were likely more brilliant than any data I collected anecdotally, despite teaching and coaching him for many years.

Life Among the "Cro-Magnums": Language and Masculinities

The purpose of this section is to discuss the multiple literacies that Chris employed to negotiate issues of power at Winnona Hill High School and in the community at large. While Chris noted the impact of his early adolescent literacy practices to understand "others," it was a more immediate issue for him to fit with what he often referred to as the "Cro-Magnum" males. Many of us think of small, rural schools as relatively "safe" places, but this was not the case for Chris, and in turn the language practices that Chris enacted were often about fitting with the dominant social constructions of masculinity in Winnona Hill.

Chris explained that there was a price to be paid for those who did not fit with these dominant social constructions; thus he learned to secure power and protection with his ability to use language to blend into the social landscape. He learned to be what I came to call a discourse chameleon. Chris was a discourse chameleon in that he used his language practices to "fit" or blend with the social landscape of Winnona Hill. While at times using language to fit, Chris also used language to oppose or make himself stand out from the crowd. Some chameleons change the color of their skin to communicate and be noticed by other chameleons, but also to blend and protect themselves in their environments. For Chris, school was not a safe place physically or emotionally, and his language practices gave him ways both to protect himself and to resist what he interpreted as oppressive dominant social constructs in Winnona Hill. During his senior year in his English 101 journal, he wrote,

> I always used to read because I had no friends. When people act surprised because I say something reasonably intelligent, I am annoyed. For all the ways they pushed me out and pushed me around, they still made me read the speeches of great orators. I was a child. I should have read mystery books. My speed was more of a slow turtle with patience. Insidiously, I caught them by their shoulder pads, out of breath from my reading marathon

of eleven years. Sometimes I believe I have beaten all of them, but today I think I would have to say I have not.

Nearly a year after Chris wrote this piece, I realized in coding my data that in several instances Chris made reference to "shoulder pads" and "kings." In an e-mail interview his freshman year of college, Chris once again made reference to harboring hatred for the "kings who sit high on past laurels." Finally, I understood. The "kings" were the high school athletes, revered by the local community, maligned secretly by Chris, even as he fought to "catch them" and their approval. He fought against his role of social outcast that he believed was linked to the perception that he was a reader of great speeches, because the "kings" would not accept him. For a time, reading was his response to being without friends. Later, as he fought for acceptance, he adapted his language practices to fit with the "Cro-Magnums." While he sometimes believed he caught them, he was not certain.

When I asked him about my emerging notion of Chris' perceptions of the high school athletes as "kings who sit high on past laurels," Chris responded in an e-mail in the second semester of his freshman year in college,

> A lot of males who excel K-12 are big guys. Big athletic guys who are mean and stupid. I think Winnona Hill is unusual, because when you grow up there are CONSIDERABLE pressures to achieve in drinking circles. I know that isn't your focus, but that scene plays a big part when you hit high school. I was ostracized for the way I could speak. I am tiny and not the average ladies man and I could communicate on a level they, big, mean guys, didn't understand. Puberty was difficult. I adapted my speech to relate funny stories punctuated with language garnish [profanity] in order to make them listen. I remember you keeping me after in seventh-grade study hall to tell me that crawling under the desks was not appropriate behavior. Why do you think I did that?

I struggled at first to recall the incident that Chris referenced. Then I remembered an after-lunch study hall that I supervised every other day. Chris was a small child among a group of larger, more aggressive boys. Chris' act of perching bird-like under a student desk in the back left-hand corner of the room was a threat to the control of my study hall. As I worked with Chris' data over time, I came to see some of Chris' behaviors as performative texts. As noted by Neilsen (1998), a text includes:

> sets of potential meanings and signifying practices adhering for readers and writers in both local and large discourse communities. A novel in an English class, for example, is a text; so, too, is the conversation about such a novel in which students engage; and so too are teen zines, mall cultures and television sitcoms.

I wondered if Chris' "perching" behaviors and language, woven together to convey meaning in a social situation, was what I came to consider a performative text. Assuming that he was trying to get the other boys stirred up as they laughed at his performance, I scolded him. As a female teacher, I had written the incident off. For Chris, the text that he constructed and performed represented his understanding of "what boys were supposed to be" (Peyton-Young, 1998) in Winnona Hill, and what he was not. In subsequent interviews, I pressed Chris to elaborate on his experiences growing up in this small town. He responded,

> Everybody knew everybody. Any social offenses committed at any point in life are remembered. The catalyst for John Willow was pissing his pants in sixth grade. This led to fights that led to lifelong banishment from elitist cliques. A person's entire history was known to everybody. An event in junior high could present a roadblock in achieving a date for the senior prom. As we matured, labels lost some of their stickiness, but you see what I'm saying.

These data are consistent with work done with gifted, rural adolescents (Cross, & Stewart, 1995). Cross (1997) also noted that gifted rural students report that they have no privacy. Chris affirmed this in describing the quality of his high school experience, writing that in a place like Winnona Hill "everybody knows everybody." There were few opportunities, in his understanding, to publicly explore who you want to be, because people's perceptions of you are so tightly woven into the fabric of the social setting. While I would argue that this phenomenon is likely present for many rural students, not only those considered "gifted," Chris demonstrated an acute understanding of the fact that people were watching. According to Chris, if an adolescent stepped out of line or did something embarrassing or as unthinkable as wetting pants (regardless of the circumstances), you would never have an opportunity to reinvent yourself or that situation.

To review, it was necessary for Chris to enact a range of language practices to negotiate this complex and even dangerous social setting of Winnona Hill High School. If perching under a desk made the big guys laugh and kept him from getting beat up, then that is what he did. Ostracized for certain literacies and accepted for others, beneath the elaborate camouflage, he was seething. To conceal his frustration and conceive of other ways to gain power via association with the "kings," other private literacy practices were needed.

Possible Lives: A Touchstone Text

The purpose of this section is to explore the role of a touchstone text that emerged as critical in Chris' adolescent literacy development. In understanding what he was not in the social worlds of Winnona High School, Chris looked for someone who was like him and found his cousin, Ron. As a high school senior, in his English 101 journal, he detailed another performative text, essentially a role-playing game, in which he and Ron engaged during junior high school (Neilsen, 1998). Chris wrote,

> On paper, we established the cities and cultures, the nations and people who would populate our world. They were all entirely imagined, raped ideas that were glued together into something unique. Both of us were unjustified pariahs to our peers, and finally this was our escape. We stood on our ground, however imagined, and there we were kings. We passed through the trials of adolescence while in the throes of the game, and the attitudes of the people and the topography of the land were altered to conform to our new beliefs. Notebooks upon notebooks were filled with the make believe, and we were confident enough to think that the game was something greater. I know it was today. It was the manic child of segregation. Years came and left again, and our sessions with paper and pen became erratic. Time to create was balanced with time to destroy ourselves. The principles of the brainchildren corroded as he and I discussed colors in a dismal fog. I do not recall the details of this fog, but it was accompanied by happiness and a certain realness. We had been accepted, and the value of the game had been made cheaper.

Based on Chris' accounting, this "Game" shaped and was shaped by both the institutional and social worlds of Chris and his cousin. Furthermore, as Neilsen (1998) has noted, performative texts often become similarly "woven into their school and social behavior in a process of ongoing revision" (p.4). In considering the role of the game in Chris' life, I combed again back through the archival documents and found a relevant sketch represented as Figure 2. As the caption asked, "Where does a 'sensitive guy' minus extraordinary genitals and a walnut-sized brain [like Chris] find a mate?" I found myself wondering where a sensitive guy like Chris could conceive of ways to be powerful and still different from the stereotypical notions of masculinity and power.

It was in the "Game" that both he and Ron conceived of such power. In the last interview with Chris during his senior year in college, he explained that the Game was largely about creating characters whose attributes and qualities allowed that character to "best" his cousin's characters in

the plots that they recorded in notebook after notebook. I realized that in the Game, Chris could consider and imagine ways of "besting" other characters including the "Cro-Magnums."

Late in their high school careers, the Game no longer allowed Chris and Ron to fit with the "Cro-Magnums," as they wanted. Hence, they adopted other behaviors and performative texts, such as taking drugs and offering drunken speeches as a way of being more masculine and hence accepted. Within their new roles of "partygoers," Chris and Ron continued, however, to revise the Game to test, and thus refine, their understandings of masculinity and power. Two years after the first reference to the Game, Chris wrote via e-mail of a conflict that occurred between his freshman and sophomore years in college. The conflict, according to Chris, emerged as a result of a fight among some of these more popular males and his cousin. The incident occurred on a nearby beach known as a party spot. Chris described via e-mail,

> Ron pulled me aside and informed me that he did not want to get his ass kicked defending me when I was acting so stupid. Five to one odds, he said harshly. What would Erestor do in this situation, he asked? And he was referring to a fighter in our Game. Only this calmed me down, for I knew Erestor would take his revenge at a better time, or disregard the conflict entirely. Erestor had always been like that, and I admired his character greatly.

As an eighteen-year-old, Chris understood he could be masculine without fighting, because Erestor demonstrated such ways of being (Gee, 2000) in the social world of the "Game." Chris could transfer Erestor's character and a definition of power as being intellectual versus physical in the social world of the beach crowded with drunken teenagers and males squaring off. The drafting of the "Game" as a performative text was rehearsal for future behavior (Gee, 1994). In writing the "Game," they co-created each other's worlds.

Chris added further to my understanding of this particular literacy practice in our last face-to-face interview in the winter of his senior year in college. He explained that characters in the

Game were based upon characters in books that he and Ron traded outside of school. Most of these texts were about "swords, bravery," beginning with King Arthur in fifth grade and moving to books by Tolkien and R.A. Salvatore in junior high. Chris said, "We created the characters to be what we wanted them to be." Chris added that the characters were not static; they changed within the text over time.

> Ralium (character name) was the hired assassin that made his first appearance in seventh grade. And as the game progressed, he got older and older. He used to be the best, and then he got older and older and he started to hate everybody. So he wasn't as good as the other people.

As the "Game" shaped Chris and Ron's social worlds, their teenage social worlds shaped the "Game." Chris explained, "Once we started smoking cigarettes, there was (in the Game) this variety of dwarf that lived in these mountains that they had transfigured into greenhouses. For the first year they were in the game, they'd just produce cigarettes. But then they started growing pot because we were into that at that point." Chris explained that this dynamic touchstone text changed and was shaped by his and Ron's social worlds.

In sum, Chris and Ron constructed and reconstructed the "Game" to conceive of characters that could "best" the "Cro-Magnums." In turn, he learned how he might like to be in the real social world of Winnona Hill, as in the example of Chris' deciding not to fight because a character in the game demonstrated such characteristics and qualities. At the same time, the "Game" was shaped by the social worlds of the adolescents. Chris did not need my independent reading and writing program in ninth grade. He and Ron already had one.

"Social Darwinism": Class, Masculinities and Power

The purpose of this section is to examine the linkages between Chris' language practices and markers of class, masculinities and power in Winnona Hill. Following the early discussions of

the game and the incident of perching under the desk in my classroom, Chris used the term "Social Darwinism" in two consecutive e-mails. When I asked for a clarification of his term, Chris bluntly wrote,

> Social Darwinism is $$$ and blunt fisticuffs. Social Darwinism is, if a big guy tells a little guy he has every intention of fucking his girlfriend, he most likely will. I was always intentionally forming symbiotic relationships. I could alter my personality to appeal to the biggest guys. I would make them laugh, guzzle beer, get them high and, to test everything, sometimes bust their balls. The result was either spoken or tacit promise of defense or complete annihilation of my enemies.

Chris' accounts forced my thinking about a social world that I thought I knew. I did not belong to Chris' male, adolescent social world, despite coaching boys' athletic teams for a number of years and thinking I knew their/his realities. I had no clue about the maze of power relationships associated with hegemonic masculinities, social class and power and the possible adaptations of behaviors such as drug use as masculine versus feminine.

"Not the average ladies man," as he put it, Chris was outside the discourse community that associated masculinity with "heterosexuality, power, dominance, privilege, and competition" (Young, 2000, p. 323). In order to fit and avoid the potential persecution of not fitting, Chris took on an almost jester-like position, perching under the desk in my classroom and offering drunken speeches at parties in an effort to entertain the "kings." At the same time, he took a level of pride in the fact that they did not understand him. He saw himself as different from the "Cro-Magnums" with the walnut-sized brains. His ability to weave words in order to fit told him that. He was both camouflaging himself and exerting power by his literacy practices in the social worlds of Winnona Hill.

As Thorne (1997) noted in a study of elementary aged children, Chris' understandings of gender roles developed at an early age. Masculinities are typically antifeminine, tied to machismo and athletic status. This concept has been explored in the field of literacy research by Young (2000) who studied the talk of adolescent boys and their dualistic practices of masculinity. As a small male who participated in non-dominant sporting activities and lacked the machismo of a ladies man, Chris adopted other "male-not-female" (Young, 2000) behaviors or performative texts in the form of partying and using profanity.

Chris was not condemning of all of the "kings," however. In the fall of his junior year, he offered a specific example of a "King" whom he admired:

> I always felt reassured when Paul was sitting on someone's tailgate at the beach with cases of beer and the prettiest girls lounging behind him. It was a quite definite indication that I would not get beaten or chased around the fire and backed up (against) my car. He once said I was cool because I got wasted all the time, but I was still smart. You're not a geek or anything, he assured me. You just talk fucked up sometimes. Paul was a King, but he wasn't a dipshit.

Interestingly, at the writing of this paper, this "King," who was the captain of the football team in Winnona Hill, enrolled in a southern university as an early childhood education major. While Chris interpreted Paul's behaviors as the dominant construction of masculinity, I knew that this was not the case. This young man struggled in Winnona Hill to define himself and his career goals, and subsequently left the area at the age of twenty-two to pursue a career teaching young children. Perhaps not so unlike Chris, he struggled to reinvent himself in terms of these dominant social constructions and also feared the kind of rejection that came from being different.

In reviewing Chris' data, it was clear that in order to deal with his fear of rejection and outright persecution, Chris adopted certain behaviors and texts that allowed him to secure power

and protection. Essentially, the chameleon-like literacy practices worked. He used paper and colored pencils to look "inside," lounged alongside a king who confirmed that he was not a geek, and negotiated the construction and reconstruction of the Game with Ron. He used literacy practices to construct, perform and review masculinities across "knowledges, symbols, styles, subjectivities and norms, including distinctive racial, ethic, and sexuality components" (Lesko, 2000, p. xix) in Winnona Hill.

Ways of Being Outside of Winnona Hill

A Transplanted Chameleon: Early College Experiences

As Chris reported, fitting in with the "Cro-Magnum" males in Winnona Hill required that he alter his personality, which in turn required the formation of what he called "symbiotic relationships" and the creation and performance of a range of texts. When he left this White, working-class, rural world, however, he was ill prepared for collisions between his Winnona Hill-based understandings and those encountered in college. The dominant social constructions of race, class and gender and the dominant social constructions encountered in the college setting reflected different "lifeworlds" (Howley, 1999; Finders, 1996) and hence his literacy practices needed to fit in the two social settings. When Chris first entered college, I did not hear from him for nearly three months until I received the following e-mail,

> Chris Erikson has entered the age of computer telecommunications for the very first time. Good afternoon. How are you today? It was quite difficult to learn the operations of the e-mail so I ignored it. "What are you going to tell her, that you're screwing off and drinking beers every day?" That is a quote from my friend, Kristi, who has assumed a maternal position in my troubled life. There is an amazing diversity of people here. The possibilities are endless. I'm watching soap operas now. What do you make of Victor Newman? I

despise my roommate, and have monopolized the domicile. I would rather be working and living in Mason Hall [residence hall] than bother with my studies.

Flannel-clad, working-class "Cro-Magnums" were what Chris knew as the dominant social construction of masculinity. With "endless possibilities" in the new college setting, he was not sure what kind of text or identity would allow him to fit with this new cast of characters and social landscape. In thinking about ways of being in this new setting, Chris wondered about stereotypical male characters, such as Victor Newman from the daytime television drama The Young and The Restless. He wondered also about his position as a male friend to a number of young women. The same chameleon-like literacy practices that camouflaged him in Winnona Hill, did not work in this new setting. As a result of this first e-mail, I began also to wonder about Chris' understandings of "work-not-school" as a part of what working-class men are supposed to be and do.

I further questioned Chris by e-mail regarding his acclimation to college. Chris wrote that he believed, who he was at home was "fake" and disclosed that when he "started remaking the character [in college], it made [him] sick." When played out in the new setting, some of the texts of masculinity in the form of getting the high school athletes high or "busting their balls" led him to difficulties. In his first semester, Chris reported to me that his drug use escalated to the point where he knew he needed help after an incident of "smoking crack in a metal elevator." He began counseling and distanced himself from a crowd that he described as "dying from the inside out." In this new social world, some of his earlier "male-not-female" texts (Young, 2000), put him in a precarious situation in a crowd bent on self-destruction by way of drug abuse.

In turn, he spent more time with the female friend described in the earlier e-mail as his "maternal figure." In an e-mail to me describing his first series of visits to a campus counseling service, he wrote, "Well, I have to watch Dawson's Creek now with Kristi and Jen. Think this drug monitoring is making me a neuter." Watching Dawson's Creek was in Chris' frame of

reference a "female-not-male" behavior, as was drug monitoring. He perceived that he was not really "female," but "less masculine" as a result of spending time with females and watching television shows that these female friends liked.

In addition to encountering a new cast of characters in college, Chris realized that the physical surroundings of college were very different than what he was used to in Winnona Hill. He described the scenery as disconcerting to an adolescent who "made himself among the trees." In the late spring of his freshman year, Chris noted in an e-mail,

> The center of campus is complete geometry, triangle shaped buildings that are disconcerting to the eye. I suspect their designer never was subject to an aesthetics course. It's all triangles, at some points the knife-edge of the structure make it appear paper-thin. A push to create the "outdoor museum" has neglected areas in need of serious visuals and placed modern sculptures made of metal with purposes of conveying what? A perpetual gloom and cold precipitation of every type assaults the spaces in between.

Three years after this description of the struggle to acclimate to his new physical surroundings, Chris told me that, other than a quick trip to Western Pennsylvania for a work-related task, he had never been "south of Albany." Other than the road trip with his cousin to set up shelves for cards and party supplies in a K-mart, he had almost no experience with settings beyond the trees.

Chris noted that he encountered foreign physical surroundings in college, along with changes in the kinds of relationships that he had with adults, especially teachers. During the spring semester of his freshman year, Chris wrote, "The greatest issue coming to college was being nobody socially to my teachers." As a rural adolescent, home and school were Chris' main settings for interacting with adults. The sparseness of interactions likely magnified their importance. Chris

had never walked into a classroom where a teacher did not recognize his last name, and more often than not, his teachers knew his sisters and his parents too.

Chris noted that the writing opportunities he had in high school allowed him a personal connection between his pen and his teachers. He wrote, " I like to express what I could not verbally. As long as somebody knows [what he's thinking] then I'm not alone." Yet in his new setting, Chris' teachers did not recognize him, and the relationship between pen and people no longer existed in quite the same way. He was lonely and uncertain about how to communicate with teachers who did not recognize him. He wrote,

> All I had to do up here was draw naked women and get wasted. I did know how to write a paper, but none of my classes needed papers. Without papers, my voice was silent and with no expression. I wrote incoherent poems in class without participating. Last night I found a beautiful edition of The Divine Comedy. I was so happy, I couldn't stand it. This was a lovely book. I went up to sign it out, but I have a fine I still have to pay. $1.50 – no joke. It probably costs a hundred dollars. I want to sign it out and give it a new home on my shelves. Lovely – pretty book.

Minus the ability to connect with teachers by means of his writing, Chris sought comfort in books, much as he did as a young child who thought of himself as a "reader of great speeches." As his high school English teacher, I did not offer Chris narratives about college, about possible lives beyond Winnona Hill. I did not challenge him to think and rehearse with language what that kind of life might look or sound like. I did not help him consider strategies for connecting to adults in this new setting, let alone help him consider how he might advocate for himself. Chris went from living his life under a microscope where "everyone knows everyone" to knowing no one and not being known. He longed for the trees and a familiar social landscape, as well as narratives of what it means to "be" in his college surroundings.

Rootless: Lost Comrades and Lost Words

The purpose of this section is to describe the literacy practices tied to Chris' understanding of being "rootless" after leaving Winnona Hill. While finding he did not fit in this new setting, Chris also found that he no longer fit in Winnona Hill. Out-migration is a common theme among rural school researchers (De Young & Lawrence, 1996; De Young & Howley, 1992), yet Chris' perspective allowed me to understand that the rejection was not unilateral. Chris did not just simply decide that he no longer wanted Winnona Hill, his experiences told him that he no longer fit either in Winnona Hill or at college. Following the Thanksgiving vacation of his freshman year he wrote,

> Going home was different. The people there are drowning. Nine DWIs on Saturday in Winnona Hill. Drug addled minds destroyed my comrades. It was gray all week. The brightness was a game of football with the good kids. So fucking lonely. I hate Plainville (college town). Home wasn't home. Rootless? I could hardly relate to anyone in Winnona Hill because I have changed. The confidences that carried me around and made me socialize petered out. I don't know who I am. I think so much, I never stop, but I can't articulate it onto paper in words. When I went home last week, all I wanted to do was roam the forest. That's where I made myself, that's my fortress of solitude. But I came back here too soon.

For Chris, there was tremendous loss in leaving the rural community that raised him. He did not "want home" as it did not "embrace [him] and [he was] not real there." He grieved the loss of family, friends and even physical surroundings. The rejection, however, was two-way. He did not wake up one morning and decide that he was too good for Winnona Hill. Yet he did make a decision that he had to "drug monitor," and thus when he crossed back into Winnona Hill he was no longer the character that socialized without fear of rejection. His comrades were lost to a world

he could no longer participate in, and he found himself drawn to the physical places where he believed he constructed his earlier identities. For a time, he also lost his ability to write about his struggles. During this time, he was without his comrades and his words. While he floundered to articulate his loss, he knew that he did not fit, either in college or Winnona Hill.

One of his lost "comrades" is his cousin Ron or his "surrogate brother," as he often referred to him. Ron left for college several years earlier, but like so many rural adolescents, he meandered home only to find that home offered little for him in terms of employment and educational opportunities. As a college sophomore, Chris e-mailed me as he waited for the bookstore to open so that he could buy another copy of Salinger's Nine Stories. Of giving his copy to Ron for Christmas, he wrote,

> The book affected him like I thought it would, it inspired him, but not the way I expected. He called some time ago completely drunk at three in the morning. After he read it, he went to the library and signed out all of the Salinger he could. He told me a story he was developing: "Crab Attack." It's about a colony of genital lice that live for the propagation of their species. When a geeky guy that "never gets laid" contracts them from a toilet seat, the colony becomes afraid that their genetic legacy will end. He said it would be some political allegory, as the colony breaks into factions that have different ways of escaping before they are shaved away. At least it got him thinking again though.

Ron had been an integral part of how Chris made sense of his world as a result of the Game. Their intense friendship was built around the sharing of books and then taking characterizations and settings from their private readings to construct the "Game." Together, they had created whole worlds with their words. Now in his junior year in college, their narratives were diverging. Just a few weeks after describing Ron's story, "Crab Attack," he wrote,

> I talked to Ron Sunday night. He was optimistic. He read me segments of a sincere story and for a while he talked as perfectly as he used to in the days of the Game. He wants to go to college again, but he doesn't think they will grant him the money. We decided to begin a correspondence of story excerpts. That's what we used to do, and we both trust each other's criticism. The happiness of our discussion was somewhat tarnished when he repeated verbatim the story he told me at the beginning of the call.

Ron and Chris were living in binary social worlds. Chris' world gave him access to "lovely pretty books," while Ron's worlds, where he worked removing asbestos and drank in the local taverns, did not afford him the public access and approval for the kinds of language practices that he and Chris enjoyed as adolescents growing up together. In the spring of Chris' junior year in college, he wrote of "The Game" and his struggle to maintain some kind of positive relationship with Ron,

> Ron and I haven't spoken since New Years. We actually got in a fight over possession of "THE GAME." He demanded that I turn over the archives, citing the dual energies that crafted its existence. I refused, understanding Ron's nomadic lifestyle. Those binders are among my most treasured articles. We were enraged and stubborn. We got in a wrestling match that I won through virtue of longer limbs. He stood up and said, "That was the first time you've bested me," and then he headbutted me directly in the face. My nose was a faucet of blood.

To summarize, when Chris left Winnona Hill, he could not have possibly anticipated the loss of friends, especially Ron, and for a time even the words to describe these losses. He was in a place quite different from his hometown, with different people and different social norms. He needed to develop new ways of being to fit into this new place.

Working in the Academy: Race, Class and Cultural Capital

The purpose of this section is to examine how Chris failed to fit in his college setting in terms of his understandings of race, class, cultural capital and what it meant to work. In addition to confronting socially constructed notions of race, Chris came to appreciate differences in social class as he encountered a number of financial obstacles as compared to middle-class college friends. He also struggled to think of work as being anything other than the manual labor that his father did in the mill or what he returned to each summer to earn enough money to return to college.

While none of the data that Chris offered during our four years of work indicated that he saw himself as lacking privilege because of his working-class status, he did become aware of class in college. From not being able to afford his art history text and studying off the Internet for the course to knowing that each and every summer he would go home to some form of manual labor in the summer, social class became a major issue for him. In his sophomore year, he wrote,

> My art history isn't going so hot. I can't afford the textbook and I use the Internet to study. I understand the history of the Baroque, but without the book, identification is nearly impossible. I won't drop it though, and I like looking at the slides he shows us in class.

Tied to Chris' construction of social class and perhaps masculinity was how Chris thought of "work." One of the high points of Chris' sophomore year was a job doing genealogical research – "discovering stories" as he described it. He lamented to me that he made little money doing this "work," although it was rewarding to him on a personal level. Yet he also set this "work" in opposition to the kind of "work" that his father did or that he did in the summer months in the local paper mill. Chris spent the months of June, July and most of August for several summers working 50+ hours per week in the mill to earn the right to return to a world where he could both

create and discover stories. In reflecting on the summer before his junior year in college, he described what it was like to work in the mill

> Sixteen hour days involuntarily. I earned an amazing amount of cash and because of that I haven't worked all school year. I was the "beater room baler." I worked with pulp prior to the giant mixing vat. I slowly forged bonds with the guys there, but I know they thought I was weird. "You remind me of Jack Nicholson," one guy said, "in The Shining."

Chris described many more incidents of his "working" in the mill. He told me of what he called "boil outs" when corrosive acid was pumped through the systems for cleaning and dripped from clouds that formed in the boiler room. He described dodging bales of pulp that he had to stack and writing story excerpts on index cards in between drops. Chris' experience in this figurative cauldron of the working class profoundly impacted his thinking. Chris shared with me in our e-mail conversations outlines of "stories" shaped by class and gender and reported writing of working-class, male characters in his journal. In this private space, he wrote of what he knew in terms of working-class, male social worlds.

Yet the "work" doing genealogical research was much more aligned to what Gee and Crawford (1997) have called "achievement spaces" than the "work" he did in the mill. Language practices that align with these achievement spaces are consistent with middle class and primarily urban understandings of social class and achievement. Thus, the language practices that Chris needed to "fit" in college were different than what he needed in the mill or on a farm in Winnona Hill. His journal consistently became a site where he explored what he knew in terms of class and gender and what he did not know in terms of other forms of diversity.

As Chris demonstrated confusion about his potential place in this new social world and dissonant notions of class and gender, race also emerged as an issue for him in college. He described to me a number of stories he was working on, that made me believe he was connecting

forms of difference he had experienced to difference that he had not experienced in terms of race. He first described a short story he was developing about a White factory worker with a degenerative nerve disorder that, he said, was based upon his experiences working summers in a local paper mill. Several weeks later, he told of writing a story about a Black construction worker who lost his wedding ring in a cement mixer. As a follow-up to these disclosures, I posed a question specifically related to his encountering racial diversity at college, and he replied,

> I always think about the stance I had in high school. Black and White is like beagles and basset hounds. They can have children, and one is not better than the other, but they are most certainly different. I would be shot if I ever voiced that here. Centerport College is modeling itself as a haven of diversity, and every year the spectrum of students widens. One of my great friends up here is Black, Irene.

In the same e-mail, he described another incident that he believed was related. He added,

> Dr. Miller [professor] is an insecure egomaniac, the worst kind. He passed out a portion of an IQ test to showcase how unfair they are to difference races. Even though, HE is a Jew, who he informed us, score higher than the Japanese.

Chris' understandings constructed in Winnona Hill conflicted with the new texts that he encountered in college. As Chris explained in our final interview, his first experience with Black students was walking across the campus on the first day of his freshman year. One of the Black students yelled and gestured in a way that frightened him. Yet after that one incident, Chris reported to me that "race wasn't an issue." As he struggled with these conflicting voices and experiences, he began to write and rewrite some of his understandings.

Yet Chris still rejected Dr. Miller's voice as that of a false messenger and failed to see himself as a privileged White male. By discrediting the professor, he perceived that his rejection of the message was justified. I wondered, too, at this point in the study, if Chris was taking what

he knew—Whiteness and work—and using those social constructions to move towards the unfamiliar. Experiences in the form of friendships with people of color became rehearsals for language via his stories and character development and vice versa. The journal, as a private space, allowed him to negotiate that which he would not discuss or negotiate in Dr. Miller's classroom. I theorized that he had to imagine how someone different from him might also be like him before he could see himself as a privileged White male.

In Winnona Hill, Chris' only opportunities to construct differences were a result of his reading, writing, speaking and listening in and out of schools. Those "texts" offered him limited opportunities to consider his privilege as a White male. In high school, he could not acknowledge his Whiteness as a form of privilege. Even in college, he only considered such difference as relevant in the development of characters in his stories.

As Weis (1990) noted in studying working-class males in a deindustrializing economy of the 1980s and 1990s, young men like Chris struggle to reaffirm the discourses of White male power and privilege in spite of an economy that increasingly denies them this privilege. Chris appeared to juxtapose old understandings next to the new texts and social experiences that he encountered. For example, during his junior year, Chris also wrote of his struggle to understand the demise of the American Dream, essentially the White, male experience of voluntary immigrants. The issue came up in a correspondence, when he wrote about his observation of an impoverished classmate from Winnona Hill who joined the U.S. Army but was discharged. The young man was married, living in a mobile home in a remote area with a wife and young child, and struggling to make ends meet. Chris empathized with this young man's struggle and connected the conversation back to his family as he wrote,

> I am sad that some people are deconstructing the American Dream. I must have been naïve to believe in it. I'm worried about the future. All I can think of is making enough money to

free Dad from the mill before it kills him. I can see it draining him, graying him, surrounding him with loud machinery, evil hours, no sleep, hopelessness. I don't know what to do.

Tied to Chris' constructions of class and masculinity was how he thought of work and the loss of privilege among working-class Whites. Solsken (1993) has explained, "Distinctions between work and play, alienated and engaged work, mental and manual labor, and men's and women's work are not mere differences, but divisions that profoundly affect life opportunities and outcomes" (p. 29). This distinction between alienated and engaged work and mental versus manual labor was evident in Chris' first e-mail, when he wrote of his desire to be living and working in Mason Hall [residence hall] rather than bothering with his studies. It was evident again in his discussions of the American Dream, essentially his father's dream, and in terms of his early understanding that this was the dream he was supposed to inherit.

Negotiating New Social Worlds: Academic vs. Personal Literacies

For Chris, one of the most difficult negotiations in crossing from high school to college was balancing his personal literacy practices with the academic literacy practices necessary for success in higher education. He remarked during the final weeks of his freshman year that he was spending "too much time creating things that don't receive letter grades." He added that he "got boxed out of every writing course" that he tried to get into and ended up with statistics. He wrote, "I'm disgusted." Regardless of his disgust, Chris would be relegated to statistics and denied entrance into any official "writing" courses for the first semester of his sophomore year. Whether this was just a matter of course in freshman registration, mediocre advising in a factory-style state college, or Chris' own delinquency in registering, was unclear.

What was certain was that Chris was experiencing conflicts regarding self-sponsored learning, academic learning, and related assessments. Even in high school, Chris would always

choose to do what he thought was meaningful versus that which brought him a letter or numerical grade. For example, he did not care that written responses were tied to the grade for my independent reading program. He was much more interested in writing his Opus, the novella that he wrote as a part of my reading and writing workshop as a ninth grader. Ironically, as a college sophomore, Chris reread the Opus, then six years old in its entirety. He explained the symbolism behind his character's actions:

> I remember trying to write it to craft a political allegory. The book is a more accurate portrayal of who I was than a diary. Dammit, I am Arod Fellhammer! Why did I never see this before? Jamey going to college is the death of Ridermom. Ketil is the pride of Lillehammer [Oksana Baiul, the Olympic figure skater], and all of the cozy snow flashes that accompany it. The Hammer of Legends was my pencil, and the Bastion of Admar was the loneliness – the place that the Hammer could be developed and the place Arod would go to ensure that it never arrived. I laughed the whole time I read it. The style is malnourished, but it has a quality I could never recreate.

Six years after crafting it, Chris' Opus still provided him a means of thinking about who he was and who he wanted to be. This touchstone text (Neilsen, 1998) provided Chris with what he seemed to be missing in his academic literary experiences. Even his desire to control his own class participation levels was not tolerated in the academy. He wrote,

> We just had our Western Civ. Course outside. The teacher approached me last week because I received A's on both midterm essay questions. Average of A then, but he reminded me that without participating I can't get above a B. It's funny because I actually read the course material for fun, and I have no questions to ask because I know the answers. I would have to spark a debate to participate because I won't just talk about bullshit like a lot of people do for points. My facial muscles are paralyzed.

This issue of mock participation (Bloome, 1989) was new to Chris. Class discussions had never been mandatory in high school. Chris had always at least had control over his voice. And now his silence, which was appreciated in high school, was interpreted as resistance in college. Into the latter part of his sophomore year, Chris still struggled with other assessment issues

> I hope I did well in art history. I studied so hard, antioxidants and grueling persistence taught all of the Rococo painters. I can sound cultured now, especially once I refine my fencing skills. However, to my despair and audibly churning stomach, the teacher abruptly changed the format of the test to focus on architecture. My heart fell and I scrambled to compose convincing essay after essay on men whose names are only bleary echoes in my memory.

Later, Chris shared that his writing process was changing too as a result of requirements in his college courses. He wrote

> I have to revise everything I hand in. A whole class is devoted to the methods of proofreading. I think that's best for me now. My brain doesn't seem as elastic as it used to be. I think that what I used to do didn't need corrections. I trusted fully what I could generate a long time ago. Sometimes I think that I lost something. I don't care if people read what I do. If they [professors] don't like it, then I'll do something different.

Yet as Chris started to receive positive feedback on his work, he talked in more positive ways about revising his academic pieces. He described altering his writing process to meet the requirements of his college English classes. He wrote, "The sad-eyed intellect [professor] read pieces of my short story as an example. It's about a man with a degenerative nerve disorder, based on one of my coworkers in the factory. That was the rough draft, I have to reorganize it by Friday." While Chris expressed discomfort with these new academic requirements in terms of products and process, he was engaging in revision and proofreading strategies that he did not

employ in high school. His grades were improving in college and he was no longer on academic probation. Perhaps he now felt more comfortable with these practices or decided that he would comply to receive a respectable grade and be able to stay in college.

The Literate Underground

While Chris had always had a literate underground, I became acutely aware of it during this study. He noted his use of language to "fit" in schools, but also noted that certain literacies could not be shared under any circumstances. In his sophomore year of college, he noted that while he was comfortable sharing most of his work, there was an important exception. He wrote, "The only exception is in past journals, where deeply private issues were in coded Cyrillic alphabet. My obsession with Ukraine, however irrational, was not without rewards." However, not all of the literacies that Chris used to negotiate social and emotional issues were private in the same way. In describing a party that had occurred in Winnona Hill during Christmas break of his sophomore year, he wrote,

> I really thought I was going to have an anxiety attack there, which sometimes happens when I make myself vulnerable. Everybody was stoned and I was frightened. I grabbed a pen and started writing a story poem on the back of a discarded clothing gift box. It was ridiculous, but when I finished I showed Tony. Everybody laughed at it, to my relief.

Whether it was being sober among stoned friends or something else that made Chris feel vulnerable was unclear to me. What seemed obvious to me, however, was that, once again, Chris created a text to negotiate a difficult situation. And while this example describes a semi-public literate act, I also was aware of some of Chris' closely guarded, hidden literacies (Finders, 1997). In his high school journal he wrote as a senior,

> I keep a number of notebooks, all filled with pen ramblings hidden in my closet, underneath a chest with an enormous lock. Ostracized in my bedroom, I came to the belief that unrecorded thoughts are prone to vanish, and in an effort to alleviate this syndrome I wrote every thought I had. I have entire years recorded in little notebooks. I have a notebook dedicated solely to stereotypes among my classmates. I have thousands of poems

and even two unfinished novels. Sitting atop this treasure trove of fool's gold, I flip through pages and I do not understand the very action of assembling them and now I feel like somebody else wrote them. Picking through this heap of literature is like picking glass pieces from a diamond mine.

Some of Chris' literacies were hidden in an almost desperate sense. I came to refer to them as Chris' "literate underground" (Finders, 1996). Yet even within his underground, there were layers. His game with Ron was part of this underground, and his use of Russian in high school was a sort of underground literacy. As a ninth grader, Chris developed an obsession with the Ukraine and the Ukrainian figure skater, Oksana Baiul. He could use this obsession with Oksana to justify his interest in the Ukraine and his desire to learn Russian. Like a young boy with pin-ups hanging on a bedroom wall, this obsession held a more practical purpose in allowing him a level of literary privacy. If he spoke in Russian in the high school cafeteria or on the cross-country bus or even during a race, no one understood him, and consequently, he kept people at bay. Chris confirmed this interpretation for me in an e-mail interview during his junior year of college, writing, "Everything you said about the Russian is dead on, I'm really quite grateful that Oksana smiled happily that distant depressing February. It gave me an exotic, explorative focus on a land dimmed by cold war rhetoric."

Chris' use of Russian and his coded Cyrillic alphabet were both ostentatious and bunker-like, protecting him against social barrages and giving him the opportunity to be noticed when he wanted to be noticed. Post cold war rhetoric and the language that accompanied the late 1980s and 1990s was exotic and appealing to Chris in a time in the United States, when the legend of the red threat was a narrative with deep historical context. I wondered if Chris' using Russian might have other implications too, as he attended a high school where Russian was not taught and hence, no one knew what he uttered. In his freshman year of college, Chris wrote,

> For all of the notebooks of writings, I have some that contain things that would completely alter people's perceptions of me, something people cannot ever know and for that I introduce the Cyrillic alphabet. I've even coded it before, in case someone realized that I don't write in grammatical Russian, but that I exchange phonetic equivalents in order to make indecipherable runes. I have this fantasy of dying and all of that mess in my closet and in my locked boxes becomes a fragmented collection that is published. That is the epitome of teenage venting with a black-eyed pretentiousness.

Chris' literacies, underground and sometimes coded, supported him as he struggled to come to grips with who he was, how people perceived him, and who he wanted to be. In high school, Chris' language practices gave him a way to fit, but also to resist, overtly and covertly. He yelled phrases in Russian at sporting events as if to mock the "kings," but at the same time to assert that he was a king too. He was different; his language practices allowed him to assert that as well. He was not like the "kings who sit high," but he was royal. As the younger cross-country athletes declared so many years earlier, he was "Lord Erikson." At the same time, the most underground of his literacies support his private exploration of who he is and who he wants to be in safety, away from scrutinizing eyes and ears governed by his native tongue.

> The other night I wrote down the deepest reasons I feel the way I do. I've never done that before. I almost didn't. I almost wrote it all in Russian, but I didn't want to hide. Everything from start to finish. I was completely truthful and I felt funny writing it. When I was done, I locked it up and I felt a little better. It makes sense now.

While compelled to lock his thoughts up, Chris was also compelled to write them. In this instance, he chose to write these thoughts in English versus his more protective Cyrillic alphabet. I learned, however, that his covert literacies served other purposes when there was an audience. In the spring of his junior year, he wrote,

> In class when I'm writing and I suspect people try to read, I automatically revert to my pseudo-Cyrillic alphabet. Sometimes if the offender is a hot girl or a girl with some redeeming feature, I will make the script as ostentatious as possible. I may as well cloak myself in mystique to override my bland physical attributes.

Whether to protect his communications from "offenders," or to make them scarlet as if in a chameleon-like mating ritual, Chris' coded language allowed him once again to hide and communicate. Like a real chameleon that changes colors, both to protect itself from predators as well as to draw attention to itself from other chameleons, Chris changed his discursive color to cloak himself in mystique or armor depending on the need. While perhaps an extreme example of hidden literacies, Chris' coded language and literate underground pushed his functioning to true chameleon status.

Chris used forms of language to communicate, whether it was with the "adaptation" of his speech to offer "stories punctuated with language garnish," or to impress a "hot" girl. His literate behaviors ran the gamut from locking his thoughts up to fearing that people would find his writings and rummage through them and defile them. Consequently, Chris held his writings tight to himself—cloaked in mystique—protected by an indecipherable alphabet. With this linguistic armor he fought off unwanted invasions and lured the kind of attention that he desired.

Until the winter of 2001, I had not seen these journals, and my understanding of these literacy practices was only by way of Chris' reports in e-mails. I also did not understand what Chris meant by "things that would completely alter people's perceptions" of him. As we sat across from each other in a diner near Winnona Hill, Chris held up one of his journals that he said he had since 1996. He said, "This is the most honest thing ever. When my faith was compromised in God, [words] like prayer came. It [what he wrote in the journal] was practice, you're just talking… you'd be talking to God but there's no one up there and I have all of these dialogues between

myself and God that just go on and on." When I asked him more about this religious conflict that he experiences, he added, "Last summer I couldn't believe that there was a hell. You remember how like on the [cross-country] bus that one time. I was so vehement about the bible [being taken literally]. I don't believe any of it anymore. And that's weird because then what do you do when you don't have faith. Then you're completely alone."

Chris was not alone, however. He always had his journals, and there he coded his most private thoughts. Raised by a mother with deep religious convictions, Chris could not even wonder out loud about his belief or lack of belief in a god. He had to code this and other thoughts that he did not disclose to me in this study. Despite the fact that these private literacies seldom connected to his work as an English major in college, these literacies sustained him through his most difficult times.

In sum, private language practices were extremely important to Chris' ongoing identity work. In the private spaces of his journals, Chris negotiated his most private dilemmas and the relationship of these dilemmas and his thoughts to his larger social worlds of Winnona Hill and college. There he wrote his deepest thoughts, coded in what he first described to me as indecipherable runes. He engaged in identity work away from the governing ears and eyes of his native tongue and came to cherish those notebooks. When he showed them to me, I almost felt like a voyeur who had invaded his most private thoughts. He told me that he could never let the journals out of his sight, as his coding scheme with phonetic equivalents was written on the inside cover. Perhaps Chris wanted to believe that no one could decipher those thoughts. Perhaps he needed that space and, as the nosy former English teacher, I had no right to even want to know what those journals contained.

CHAPTER V

Crystal: Multiple Literacies Within and Beyond Winnona Hill

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the multiple literacies that shaped and were shaped by ways of being and dominant social constructions of social class, femininity and Whiteness for an informant called Crystal. Examining the reading, writing, speaking and listening of a White, working-class, female adolescent during the time between her senior year in high school and her senior year in college, the chapter attempts to highlight the language practices that Crystal employed during this important time in her life.

The case history began with my perspective as Crystal's high school English teacher and coach and what I thought I knew about Crystal and her literacy practices as a result of our interactions in and around Winnona Hill. The chapter presents the major categories of focus in terms of Crystal's literacy practices. She used these practices to negotiate the social, cultural and political worlds in and between her rural community and life as a college student.

A Teacher's View of Crystal: Becoming a "Woman of The House"

I met Crystal as she waited for the after-school activity bus in a foyer at the front of the Winnona Hill School. This peanut-of-a-child caught my eye as I supervised my cross-country athletes after practice. She stood near the student pay phone with tears streaming down her face and an ice pack held to her nose. She wore shin guards that told me she was coming from soccer practice. Always looking for a potential recruit, I explained that cross-country was not a contact sport. Days later this fair-haired seventh grade student showed up at my classroom door and asked to join the team.

Like Chris, Crystal was a student in my English 9 class, and again as a senior when she opted for English 101. Unlike Chris, however, Crystal longed for good grades and appeared to buy into the systems of rewards, including report cards and teacher praise built into many secondary

schools in the United States (Kohn, 1999). Her behaviors in academic contexts indicated to me that she wanted teachers and other adults to like her work. She completed assignments on time, often did extra credit assignments, and was compliant in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. Crystal did whatever was asked of her in order to receive a good grade, whether that meant completing reader response selections in my English 9 class or engaging in practice essays in preparation for the New York State English Regents examination. She scored even higher than Chris on that statewide examination as an eleventh grader.

Along with her apparent need to please and demonstrated success in school, Crystal was reserved in terms of writing about her personal life. In my experiences with her, she seldom wrote about personal issues in a classroom setting when given choices that allowed for such connections. Even when the writing activity specifically directed the student to connect the reading to personal experiences, as was the case with the English 101 curriculum, Crystal's writings were guarded to the point of appearing not genuine. It was my impression that Crystal told people in authority what she thought they wanted to hear.

A part of the social cliques from which Chris was mostly excluded, Crystal ran with the popular crowd and negotiated within a tight network of friends. Whether it was in a classroom or cross-country practice, Crystal carefully followed the rules and achieved good grades, but did not take risks or engage in literacy practices that allowed her audience, mainly teachers like me, to know what she was thinking or feeling. Crystal was never the star socially, academically, or athletically, but she was always the friend of the homecoming queen, class president or all-star softball pitcher.

My experiences with Crystal outside of school told me that her family life was not typical of students of her social status in school. When Crystal was a junior in high school, I took her to the hospital with a badly sprained ankle after a cross-country practice. Her father, who generally

worked as a logger or construction worker, was on a job site and could not be reached by phone. Her grandmother, the other individual listed on her emergency card, was also not home. Together, we drove in my car to the nearest hospital, twenty-five miles north of Winnona Hill. We joked for years that the hospital personnel mistook me for her mother. I was fair, like Crystal, and a bit matronly. The hospital personnel never even asked me for her medical release form.

Like the families described by Rubin (1992) as "hard-livers," Crystal's family struggled with alcoholism, unstable family relations and difficulty in making ends meet. As Rubin noted, these "hard-livers are, in some fundamental way, the nonconformists – those who cannot or will not accept their allotted social status. They are the women and men who rebel against the grinding routine of life" (p. 34). Crystal had described her father as being nonconformist in that he was a "hippy partier" and irresponsible in terms of the amount of time and money he spent in local bars. Interestingly, however, Crystal had to conform academically and socially to get out of Winnona Hill.

Crystal was one of very few working-class or poor adolescents in this small, rural school who ran with the popular, largely middle-class, crowd. While class lines were muted in Winnona Hill because the upper middle class was not pronounced, there were distinct layers with the working class. These distinctions were marked by the possession of a newer, but not necessarily new car. Other markers were a snowmobile or other recreational vehicles or clothes from a mall twenty-five miles north or fifty miles south, as compared to clothes purchased at the local Ames store just six miles south. Middle-class families often had these possessions along with family vacations, dinners out at local restaurants, and occasionally a summer cottage. While decidedly working class or poor, based upon eligibility for free lunch, Crystal spent a great deal of time with the middle-class families of friends. The relationships with these other families, essentially an extended family that she created for herself by aligning with these other girls, served her well.

When Crystal was preparing to enter ninth grade, her mother died slumped over in a pick-up truck that sat in a dirt driveway in front of the small wood-frame house on a side road six miles from town. Her battle with liver disease was over, but the battle for Crystal was just beginning. Crystal stood next to her father in the receiving line at her mother's calling hours. Her slight frame clung to me as I crossed in front of her. I held her tight and we both choked back tears. Crystal had crossed to another world. At thirteen, she was the woman of the house.

Early Literacy Memories: Home and School

Crystal reported distinctions and overlaps between her "home" and "school" literacy practices. In school, she recalled early reading success with primers and an SRA basal series. Crystal reported that she engaged in a competition to finish such class work ahead of other children. In writing about her memories of home in e-mails, she described a language-rich environment. As often described by family literacy researchers focused on working-class or poor families, Crystal's home environment was not text rich in the conventional sense of many books, writing or drawing materials (Morrow, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Crystal described activities like talking and singing with the women of the house, especially her mother and maternal grandmother.

While conversations and songs around a kitchen table and her reported success in the primary school classroom lay the foundation for academic aspirations beyond Winnona Hill, narratives garnered from middle-class peers and their families shaped the "expectation" that she would attend college. This "expectation" was shaped by the interactions with and the language practices co-opted from these other families. Such expectations contrasted with what some rural schools researchers have noted as the tendency of rural adolescents to aspire less often to professional careers (Haller, E. & Virkler, S., 1993; Hektner, 1995). At the same time, her college

aspirations conflicted with Crystal's understanding of what it meant to be like her mother and grandmother.

Well into junior high school, Crystal struggled to reconcile the dissonance between the different "institutional voices" and what it meant for someone like her to be successful (Dillon & Moje, 1997). Such "voices" are the dominant understandings in particular organizations or communities. One such "voice" that Crystal encountered in Winnona Hill, told her that being successful meant being a woman of the house, staying home to raise children and enjoying occasional shopping trips to the city. The second voice spoke of a world and life aligned with Gee's (2000) "achievement spaces" and literacy practices aligned with middle-class understandings of academic achievement and success. This latter voice aligned with Crystal's emerging understanding of what she would need in order to be successful in terms of career and finances.

In an e-mail during her freshman year of college, Crystal reflected on her early literacy learning, "My Mom and grandmother taught me everything that I know." When asked to elaborate, she wrote of her mother:

> People don't understand that we were best friends and that it is really hard to not have a mom around at any age, whether you're 8 or 45. It upsets me to think that she couldn't be here when I graduated or when I got my grades in college [3.74 grade point average during her first semester]. She never went to college and from day one stated that I would definitely go and was smart enough to rule the world. She was very smart and loved English, reading, movies and music, all the things that I love. I think that my love of literature came from her. I know that when she died, I drowned myself in school, in running, not to think about it. I felt that all of the things that my mother had dreamed of doing she never got to do. I realized that being a good person really didn't mean anything in the real world. I didn't want to have

to work as hard as she did to support her family, with little room for herself and the things that she loved. She lived for her children. I want to be able to offer a family what she offered me and more. I don't want to rely on a man who's not around to support me, and I want the finest things that she never had. I know that being a woman, an education is my only way there."

Watching her mother struggle contributed to the dissonance between the possible life of a woman of the house and the middle-class notion of success that told her to seek a formal education. If she wanted the "finest things" and freedom from depending on a man who "is not around," she had to go to college. With only a handful of families who were middle class and college educated, Crystal had just a few potential narratives from which to draw.

At the same time, Crystal's understandings of her early literacy practices and success were aligned with her understandings of what it was to be a woman like her mother and grandmother. What it meant to be literate, then, conflicted with her understanding of how she might be literate enough to go to college. As Mom waited tables at a local diner to help the family financially, Crystal's grandmother did "educational things" with her. According to Crystal, in an interview before her senior year of college, her grandmother "has a tape of me singing (nursery rhymes) when I was little. I was like four." The only child in her grandmother's care for extended periods of time, Crystal reported watching Sesame Street sitting with her grandmother on the couch, reading an alphabet book, talking and singing nursery rhymes. This report was consistent with Solsken's (1993) premise that "the responsibility for children's literacy within families is generally assumed by females as part of mothering" (p. 31).

Crystal clarified in an interview just before her senior year in college, "My parents read to me." Yet as she perceived her early literacy learning, "Grandma really taught me. I could read before I went to school." Crystal did not remember the specifics of learning to read with her

grandmother, only that she could engage in tasks that the other children could not. She could write her name and read the "little books" that were, in her recollection, designated for first-grade students by the time she entered kindergarten. Crystal recalled that the people who ran the "reading center" at school said they should "get my grandma down here" to work with the children, in light of Crystal's early reading success.

In first grade, Crystal "realized that [she] was advanced." She and another girl [the daughter of two foreign language teachers in the school district] "tried to see who could get the farthest in the SRA [basal] series." "We had a little competition," Crystal explained in the summer before her senior year in college. "I started them [SRA series] in first grade," when the other children were learning to decode simple words. "I was doing them every morning so I could beat her. I would be like racing. She was just doing them."

This metaphor of racing appeared consistently in Crystal's descriptions of learning in and beyond Winnona Hill. When not struggling to finish her work ahead of her classmates, Crystal read for other purposes. Crystal did not, however, report the level of private, independent reading that Chris noted. She recalled a number of texts that "were read to us" in elementary school, such as Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. She read the "Ramona books" on her own in second grade, but refused to read the "Babysitter's Club" books which were popular among her peers, because "they were stupid." Crystal was not a classic example of a proficient adolescent reader who read often for pleasure. While she reported early school success, she described a home environment that was rich in oral language rather than print. Her interactions with written texts were mainly in a traditional school setting, and often linked to and shaped by external rewards systems such as staying ahead of other students or getting good grades.

As O'Brien (1998) has documented, adolescents often make clear distinctions between their school literacy practices and out-of-school literacies. Crystal's personal and out-of-school

literacies were largely shaped by a love of popular music and popular culture, fostered as a young child who watched all of the music awards shows with her mother, but "grew up with Dad's music—Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin." Consistent with Rubin's (1992) descriptions of "nonconformist" working-class adults, Crystal described her father as a former "class clown" who "was responsible at work, but reckless with other things," such as the time and money he spent in local taverns. The popular literacy practices modeled by her parents, however, were not imported into school, according either to Crystal's reports during this study or my experiences with her.

As Crystal raced to become literate enough to get out of Winnona Hill, she seemed to decide that she needed to learn and adopt middle-class literacy practices. She perceived that, despite the fact that her mother told her she was smart enough to rule the world, her grandmother taught her to read, and she grew up listening to Dad's music, these literacies would not allow her to access college. She looked for an understanding of what it might mean for someone like her to cross to college.

Posing: Language and Social Class

As a teenager in Winnona Hill, Crystal balanced a number of roles and a range of literacy practices. She half-heartedly used private spaces, in the form of a journal, in the English 101 curriculum to write of her domesticated role and maternal-like responsibilities for her younger sister. In academic settings, Crystal used language to blend with middle-class peers and gain access to upper academic tracks in math and science. Her ability to blend or pose as middle class by fitting with the middle-class peer network also secured her access to the social cliques from which Chris was mostly excluded. Like Chris, however, Crystal was acutely aware of issues of power surrounding gender, social class, sports and academic achievement in the school. She was friends with the middle-class girls and often dated the males that Chris referred to as "kings." Unlike Chris, however, Crystal noted benefits of a small school where "people looked after you."

It was through these interactions with adults who "looked after her," including families of friends and one long-term boyfriend, that she garnered information about what it might mean to live and learn beyond her working-class experiences in Winnona Hill.

In her English 101 journal, Crystal described her struggle to be a woman of the house responsible for housework and raising her younger sister:

> After arriving home late after a full day of practice and work, I am faced with those frequent questions. Do I attend to the dishes that have been festering in the sink for an unknown amount of time or start my paper? Those dishes can't wait any longer, the paper waits.

In another entry, she added,

> My sister needs a strong role model and companion in her life. The attention she requires and deserves is enough to entirely overwhelm a person. On one of the few free nights I have with my boyfriend, the questions and choices start to resurface. Do I leave her at home with the television as her only companion? Or do I take her along to invade on that one-on-one time that I am so often denied?

As a high school student, Crystal "played nice" and appeared to accept that her needs must be set aside. During her freshman year of college, she began to show her frustration as her sister's behavior began to interfere with her ability to be perceived as a person who was balancing all of her roles successfully. She wrote in an e-mail,

> Everyone made excuses for her all of her life and now everyone is wondering why she acts the way she does. I took care of her forever, and was the one who always looked like the bad guy because I had to discipline her. She told everyone at school that I was mean to her and told Dad the same thing. But now that I'm gone, they're faced with the same problems that she dealt to me and they don't know what to do.

In an interview during the spring of her junior year of college, she further reflected on these experiences, "I had this totally domesticated role. I don't think that I ever was able to address any creative thing or anything abstract because I just was always [pause]. I felt like a robot." In addition, to making her feel like a robot, her sister's struggles also interfered with Crystal's ability to pose as middle class. In her sophomore year, the struggle built to a crisis state as her sister dated a young man who was considerably older than she was at fifteen. This young man was often in trouble with local police, had two children by another woman and lived in a trailer park that Crystal scorned. Of the relationship Crystal wrote, "I fought the thing, the whole break. I am happy to be back though, less stress. How messed up is that? Going back to college to not feel stressed."

Crystal's sister struggled academically and could not blend as Crystal had. Her dating an "undesirable" young man even further marked her, and indirectly marked Crystal. As Crystal raced toward the "finest things," other struggles emerged. In talking about social class, Crystal wrote in her sophomore year of college,

> In high school, you noticed social class, but not regarding yourself. I was never really aware of my social class because I always had nice things in school. No matter what, my mom always made sure her girls had nice school clothes, sneakers, etc. After that, I always worked so I had nice things. You really couldn't tell in school that I wasn't well off. The only thing that would have set me apart was the free school lunches, but no one is ever aware of that. I just said I paid ahead.

At the minimum, Crystal was aware enough of her social class to construct a text "to say" that she paid ahead. Even the understanding that her mother worked hard to make sure that "her girls had nice school clothes," taught Crystal early the importance of certain language and social

practices to blend with her middle-class peers. "Free lunch," as Crystal perceived it, was not important if she blended in other ways.

Also important to Crystal as she moved into high school were the literacy practices that would help her understand what college might be like. Both Crystal and Chris used "racing" metaphors to describe their experiences. Unlike Chris who described his "race" as a reading marathon that he engaged in to catch the kings, Crystal "raced" through school-sponsored literacy activities to be like the middle-class girls in terms of academic achievement. In her sophomore year of college, she looked back on her struggle to imagine going to college or a life beyond Winnona Hill. She wrote in an e-mail, "When I was growing up, I always thought I'd live there forever and raise a family. No one in my family had ever gone to college, so I knew no other world."

As she explained, the texts that she drew upon to rewrite her understandings of such possibilities were not made available to her in school by way of teachers, guidance counselors or mentors, but rather through middle-class peers. Crystal said in a face-to-face interview in the spring of her junior year, "The only thing that gave me a glimpse of college life was Kim Jones [an older sister of a friend from town]. I hung out with Cara [Kim's younger sister] in junior high. That was my knowledge of college."

She added, "I heard so much about the stuff she did, her party life. She would just say that you don't really even learn everything in class. I truly never remember her talking about academics. That's really the only person I knew that knew anything about college."

Aside from conversations with her friend's sister and a few anecdotes about college told by teachers, Crystal reported minimal understanding of the potential crossing to higher education and how the social and academic worlds of higher education might be quite different from Winnona Hill.

"Labeled Smart Kids": Posing and the Discourse of School

Crystal explained in a face-to-face interview during her junior year of college,

> The people I saw when I was growing up who were successful were teachers. I didn't see many opportunities for professions. I'm the first person in my family to go to college. Everybody in my family is an office worker. All the women are office workers or the men are construction workers. I never saw anything past a stable job where I could live. And I know this sounds so stupid, but it was like, "Oh, am I going to be able to have a family with this job?" Like, "Oh if I'm a social worker I'll be able to have a family."

In enrolling in college as a social work major, Crystal compromised her aspirations to go to college with the expectation that she would inherit what she referred to as the "socially structured dream." As she explained in an e-mail, this dream was to "marry a construction worker who will build you a house with two cars to go along with it." Almost immediately, she noted that other students at her public university, most of whom graduated in the top ten percent of their high school classes, had experiences that were different from hers in Winnona Hill. In the spring of her freshman year, she wrote,

> Winnona Hill didn't offer any of us shit as a school. I only realize that now after being here and seeing all of the people around me, barely none of whom are from Upstate NY, who transferred in as much as 32 credit hours from AP classes in high school.

Crystal believed that what was lacking in Winnona Hill went beyond academic offerings. She noted in a subsequent e-mail,

> I feel there were many oppressed talents roaming around our school. There really wasn't room for any type of creativity or originality in a broad number of areas. Students weren't really allowed to find their niche. Opportunities were limited for people who had other

extracurricular interest outside of sports. Example: We had no computer club, a limited drama department, etc.

Even within the sports teams, there were hierarchies and cliques, she explained. Large crowds showed up for football games, but boys' or girls' cross-country contests were minimally attended.

When I asked Crystal to clarify exactly how she did not feel prepared, especially since she seemed to do so well the first semester, she wrote back to me,

> I don't think that those credits made them [students from more metropolitan or more affluent areas] any better at school. I had the basics, I guess. They were no smarter than I was, I soon found out. I was led to believe throughout high school that I wasn't smart, but just worked hard. When I got an A in Biology (in college) I started to question that.

The next day, I asked Crystal to again clarify how she was made to feel "not smart." She wrote,

> Mr. Jones made me feel not smart. He basically told me that I wasn't smart enough to be in Course III [third Regents math course]. The thing was I did good with Mr. Brown. Mr. Jefferson was sort of like that too. They all catered to the "labeled smart kids."

I followed with a clarifying question in an e-mail, asking Crystal to tell me about the "labeled smart kids." She reported that they were all male except a handful of girls that Crystal described as "teacher's kids." Ironically, these girls represented some of the families that "looked after her."

I theorized that Crystal had to play the female role similar to what Walkerdine (1997) has called "Little Orphan Annie." Access to this popular crowd came from being the "good little girl" that the "Daddy Warbucks" figures [symbolized by the families who befriended her] wanted to help and support. As Walkerdine described, Little Orphan Annie was "a working-class girl

without a family or community, whose task is to present an image of the self-sufficient working class on one hand and the lovable object of middle-class character on the other" (p. 4). While Crystal did have a father and grandmother, the relationship with the middle-class families made the comparison appropriate. Yet there was an irony to these relationships that figured into the role of this kind of character. As I thought about this irony, I found myself recalling a conversation that I had with a fellow teacher whose daughter was one of the "teachers" and "labeled smart kids." Decidedly middle class, this family had taken Crystal on several vacations, offered her a place to stay, clothes and experiences that she would not otherwise have been able to imagine.

My colleague remarked that she felt that Crystal "used" her daughter to gain access to the family. I remember at the time not replying, but thinking that Crystal had no choice. She was a motherless adolescent with a father who spent the bulk of his time on a barstool. How could she afford to dream without these relationships? In a face-to-face interview in the spring of Crystal's junior year, she confirmed my interpretation. She said, "I mean (this teacher) was successful. That definitely was something like (pause) They were a nice family, they had money, you know. I wanted to live like that."

Crystal decided that she had to be the kind of girl that people wanted to take care of. She had to be feminine and, at least on the surface, grateful, which is a feminine characteristic ascribed to Little Orphan Annie (Walkerdine, 1997). Unlike Crystal, the children of teachers in poor, rural schools had power in two senses. They knew the discourse of school (Heath, 1988) and they were decidedly middle class. Crystal's race through the SRA series in the first grade was symbolic of her constant fight to keep up, despite the fact that her middle-class peers and their families knew the linguistic lay of the land. Although Crystal played by the rules in high school, she appeared to understand that she was not like the labeled smart kids. She could pose by working hard, complying and being friends with them. She was both grateful and resentful.

Adopting Middle Class Discourses: Class, Femininity and Achievement

Crystal appreciated the intimacy of a school the size of Winnona Hill. She wrote, "There were benefits of going to a small school. Certain teachers will help you out, monitor and keep track of you. That definitely helps when you know that someone is looking over your shoulder." Unlike Chris, who found this intimacy repressive, Crystal appeared to understand the importance of these relationships for her success. These middle-class families, as she noted, understood the importance of an education, unlike those in the community at large. As Crystal resolved the dissonance between the competing life narratives of a woman of the house and the middle-class families, she began to co-opt the literacies and values of the middle class in Winnona Hill. In an e-mail from her freshman year of college, she wrote,

> The mentality of Winnona Hill [community at large] is limited and ignorant. Most of these people don't realize what their kids are missing, mostly because they've never made it beyond Winnona Hill. As long as they can save a couple of dollars (in the school budget), they are happy. The things that they look at as being extravagant are common entities in the lives of many other kids in NY. The opportunities should be there for everyone. At least then you could say that there was a choice to go beyond Winnona Hill.

Crystal was, on some levels, an example of Rubin's transcendent child. Rubin (1996) studied children who became successful adults despite difficult childhood and adolescent experiences, such as living in an alcoholic home or losing loved ones at an early age. At times, Crystal worked two jobs during high school, maintained good grades, played sports, was active in other extracurricular activities and ran with the popular crowd. Her father was a laborer or spent much time and money in the local taverns, while her sister struggled in school and aligned with a crowd of teenagers often in trouble with the law. She was, as she described, a "robot." As a freshman in college, she began to believe that the lack of opportunities in Winnona Hill made her

race towards success more difficult than that experienced by the students who came from middle-class backgrounds.

The relationship that Crystal had with her long-time high school boyfriend was also important in her understanding of what it might be like to cross to college. He represented her "socially constructed dream" of living and raising a family in Winnona Hill, as well as a narrative of crossing to college in that his older sister attended the same college in which Crystal eventually enrolled. This young man supported Crystal's role as a mother figure to her younger sister by inviting the sister to go places with them. He was the construction worker who could build her the house with two-stall garage. As such, for Crystal, he was what it meant to be masculine, and to be with him was what it meant for Crystal to be feminine in Winnona Hill. If he was working on a construction site near Crystal's college, he would stop and see her, bringing her the items that typically arrive in care packages from home, such as contact solution and the newspaper. As Solsken (1993) has noted, the dynamics associated with female gender roles in the working class often justify male dominance in the working class. Crystal's struggle in high school and initially in college consisted of this back and forth fight between institutional voices aligned with being a woman of the house married to the construction worker, or being a woman who did not have to rely on a man who was not around.

As I considered this conflict of voices, I remembered an incident from the latter part of Crystal's senior year. She stood on a staircase at the end of the school day as I was running into the high school office to check my mailbox. She dug through her book bag, intent on showing me something. I stood impatient to check my mail and return to the students who sat in my classroom. She retrieved from the folds of her notebook a copy of the check for her room deposit written off her own checking account. She told me how she finally saved the $150.00 for a housing deposit by working in a local restaurant. This was a huge amount of money for Crystal. And while there may

have been the option for Crystal to waive such a fee in light of her financial circumstances, that assumed that she would even know what questions to ask to bring about such an exception. The cancelled check, for her, was proof that she was not like her mother. Standing on those stairs, she wanted me to know that she was indeed going to college.

Juxtaposing New and Old Ways: Early College Experiences

When I first investigated Crystal's crossing to higher education, I thought of her academic literacy practices. Despite the perception that some students had more access, Crystal's transition in terms of academic achievement was relatively smooth. She made the Dean's list both semesters of her freshman year. This was in stark contrast to Chris, who was put on academic probation that same year. She wrote in an e-mail that "knowing she had to read everything and being able to read everything" allowed her to be successful. When I asked Crystal how she understood her early academic success, she noted, "I think that there were people and events in my life that motivated me."

Two years later, her accounting of the "motivation" was somewhat different, however. In the last of our face-to-face interviews in the summer before her senior year in college, Crystal noted that early in her college career she was "running scared." She said that she was "constantly working [her] ass off," always in the library and determined not to "make the mistakes that [she saw] others make." She also gave the example of a mother of one her classmates making a prediction that she "wouldn't make it" in college.

Crystal's use of racing and running metaphors was an interesting way of looking at her academic and social literacies. Crystal came out of the blocks as if she were running a 100-meter race, only to learn that college was more like a marathon. Over the course of our four years together, Crystal bounced back and forth between optimism and despair about college and the possibilities in her life. She reported in her sophomore year of hearing Margaret Atwood speak on

campus. She wrote, "I am so inspired now. I hear so many words in my head. I just want to write them down. I had to literally run back from the seminar so I could write down the words. I think I'm looking down the track of an English major." During the same semester, she wrote that she was struggling academically for the first time:

> I'm not doing too well in Computer Science. Actually, I'm failing it and am totally lost. I only have one test left and no way to really redeem myself. I have a 3.3 right now, and I think that this semester without the CSI, I'll do good again. I've definitely experienced the sophomore slump. It sounds odd, but I'm reluctant to quit something. That's why I didn't drop it before the withdrawal period. I was thinking I could come out of it.

Just before her senior year, Crystal noted that she came to college thinking that it was "something you do like a job, punching a time clock." Like Chris, that kind of working-class metaphor resonated for her. She was not accustomed to seeking help from professors or teaching assistants and assumed that if she put in the time and stuck with the course, she would pull out of it. Although she was moderately successful in academics, when she ran into trouble, she did not understand how to advocate for herself or even how to drop a course before hurting her grade point average.

"Black Pants Bar Scene" and "Venting": New Social Literacies

As she described her academic challenges, Crystal also offered insights into the social worlds of college as compared to Winnona Hill. First, Crystal described life on the urban campus replete with what she referred to as a "Black Pants Bar Scene." She also reported that electronic communication in the form of Instant Messaging was linked to this social scene and the discourse practices she saw as necessary to "fit" in college. In contrast, she described the social world of Winnona Hill where the dream was still to marry a construction worker who would build her a house and give her money to play "Quick Draw" on a Friday night at the tavern. Third, she

described the world of back-stage passes and e-mail conversations with managers of locally- and nationally-known rock bands that Crystal followed as a result of her interest in music, but also as a means of imagining a career in the music industry. All three communities demanded different literacy practices of Crystal. Some of these language practices and social worlds conflicted with Crystal's dominant understandings of race, class, gender, geography and religion.

In our e-mail conversation, Crystal referred to the "black pants bar scene," and described Thursday as "a big going out night here." When I asked her to further define the "black pants bar scene," she explained,

> There was a segment on Entertainment Tonight about us (the college) and the black pants bar scene. How girls get here (and) go crazy. It is pretty fun here. I guess we're in Playboy for the best looking girls in the country. Number 1 party school too, we're getting quite the reputation. Academics and fun all in one." When I asked for still more information, Crystal offered her definition, "Black pants bar scene: The snatchy sorority girls wear snatchy tight blank pants and tight little tank tops in the middle of winter. They're all tan and they all wear the same kind of make up with the same jewelry and Guess watches and the new trend in black shoes. Don't get me wrong. I love fashion, but this gets a little ridiculous.

Crystal was not a part of the language community of the sorority girls, nor would her financial situation allow her to be a part of this social world. While Crystal claimed not to have noticed social class in high school, class became a major issue for Crystal in college. In our e-mail conversations, Crystal noted being prepared for diversity in terms of race and ethnicity in college, but not social class. She wrote that people in Winnona Hill had "told" her about the ethnic and racial diversity. She was not, however, prepared for the "Long Island rich crowd" or "the girls in their black pants and chunky shoes."

Posing for middle class in this crowd was difficult for Crystal. Even a conversation in a dorm room at college had implications around social class. She said that a conversation "would tell that you're (meaning her) from a different culture. I remember it's stupid but one of my roommates, everything in her room was Polo, everything she owned. I mean, she had (pause) she had money. I remember meeting a girl from Utica. I was talking to her. There was this other girl in her room and I was telling her about the girl with all of the Polo stuff. She's got this and that and this and everything's got to be this. And the other girl in the room says, 'What's wrong with that?' (As if talking to herself) 'Shut up.' You just say… you know, you just totally made yourself look like dirt almost, like they're like (thinking to themselves) "Oh, ok, where is she from?"

It was obvious to Crystal that the literacy practices that she used in high school to fit would not allow her to fit in this setting. She could no longer say, she paid ahead, or reject the need to dress all in Polo. Even into her junior year of college, dimensions of this aspect of her case emerged. She explained that one of her roommates has a different perspective on how bills get paid. She wrote, "We (Crystal and another roommate) pay them on time, but our roommate that has everything in her name is rich and doesn't understand. She totally makes me feel like I'm freeloading, even though I pay just as much as she does." Crystal reported knowing that her approach to bill paying was shaped by social class, but also believed that her roommate did not appreciate that her understanding of how to pay bills might be influenced by social class.

In response to a follow-up question about her reported feeling outside of the world of the sorority scene and the "rich" crowd during her sophomore year, Crystal replied,

> I think that this year things are different though. The sorority girls are almost a minority except for the quad where I live where all of the on-campus sororities and fraternities are located. I live with up-staters so it's cool. But the Long Island girls don't hide their snobbiness, nor the guys. At least in Winnona Hill people tried to mask it (snobbiness)

because it wasn't acceptable. Here it's the norm. Sorority girls date frat guys and vice versa. No mixing allowed. Sorority girls don't talk to non-sorority girls on a regular basis. Same goes for frat guys.

Geography mattered in Crystal's perceptions of social class and power. It was safer to live with "up-staters" who were less likely to make her feel inferior because she did not have a lot of money.

Electronic communications in the form of e-mail and Instant Messaging (IM) emerged as a literacy practice that allowed Crystal to transcend geography, however. These literacy practices were important aspects of Crystal's relationships, both with men (as in the case of Instant Messaging the guy she "hooked up with") or in keeping in touch with other young women who left Winnona Hill for higher education. Of one particular girl she wrote, "Kristen and I still keep in touch on a regular basis. She is one of two people that I can actually talk to on a college level basis, not even about college, but life. We have similar problems and interests."

Crystal also forwarded chain letters and jokes, and described being lost without e-mail in the summer months or when she was home on vacations. Her father did not own a computer and neither did Crystal. She relied on the university facilities or the PCs owned by roommates to stay connected via the Internet with people at college and from Winnona Hill. When returning to school her sophomore year, she wrote to me that through the summer, "I didn't have any way to vent. I didn't have a computer, which sounds crazy, but it was awful. I had no e-mail. You know that is my life."

Later in describing the beginning of a relationship that revolved around life in the local clubs and electronic literacy practices in romantic relationships, she wrote in her sophomore year,

Lo and behold, he was (out) with another girl. He kept looking at me, but would say nothing. I had to leave because I was getting rather hysterical. I guess when I got home he

was signed onto instant messenger and I wrote a bunch of stuff to him, like I was interested and now I guess it's too late…blah, blah, blah. I guess I wrote some mean stuff too and then I wrote my phone number. How messed up is that? Anna, my friend, had to come in and get off it (the computer).

With the instant nature of electronic communications, Crystal knew that she must be aware of issues such as keeping information like phone numbers private. With her abilities impaired by alcohol, she did not heed appropriate caution and was sanctioned by her roommate who was monitoring her actions. In having these conversations via IM or in chat rooms, Crystal engaged in yet another form of "posing." She wrote in that medium what she would not say in the bar.

Electronic communication also linked her to home in ways that highlighted conflicts with other institutional voices and constructions of who and what she thought she was supposed to be. She wrote to me via e-mail during her junior year,

> My church just sent me an e-mail that they're doing Valentine's love kits for the poor for Valentine's Day—candy, soap and stuff. I'm going to contribute something. I was also searching the Web and came across a horoscope site. I'm convinced I'm a Pisces and not an Aries—borderline birthday. My suitemate is convinced of that too. She's into that. Tried to get my tarot card reading too. Ironic that I talk about psychics and church in the same paragraph. Bad little Catholic girl.

Crystal encountered a range of new social literacies in college. The "Black Pants Bar Scene" was a discourse community that Crystal had to learn to comprehend and a social world that she had to negotiate using a range of literacy practices including e-mail and Instant Messaging. Crystal was also forced to comprehend her earlier understandings of what it meant to be in this new social world. At times, these earlier understandings interfered with her notions of what it meant to be female, working class, and from a place like Winnona Hill. At times, even writing of

psychics and church together in an e-mail causes her consternation of whether she is a good or bad girl.

Social Discourses: Conflicting Notions of Race, Class and Cultural Capital

In writing about her experiences at college, Crystal indicated that she rejected the social scene in Winnona Hill in favor of the faster-paced social scene of the urban campus. In the spring of her freshman year she noted,

> I have only been home a few times since I have been at college and each time I vow to never go back. If it wasn't for my family I probably never would. There is nothing for a 19-year-old to do and no one to talk to for that matter. If you talk about college and all of the people you have met, you're conceited and too good for Winnona Hill. The Winnona Hotel houses all of the neighborhood drunks, and if you're lucky you can go to the Backroads Bar and play Quick Draw, but that's only on special occurrences.

Crystal explained that in Winnona Hill, she can't "talk" about college. Yet Crystal could not simply reject Winnona Hill, because her family was there; consequently, she learned to employ different literacy practices in each setting.

Three years later, when I shared with her the part of the case study that explored her struggle to fit in the two social settings, she wrote: "The Winnona Hotel is where everybody knows me because they all know my Dad. I'd sit there with John [hometown boyfriend] and he would give me money to play Quick Draw. And it's like, is this what I want to be doing for… I mean that's my big fun Friday night?" Crystal struggled to use language to fit in both communities, switching back and forth from the language and behavior needed to support her fitting in the Winnona Hotel, in contrast to her college "bar scene." In Winnona Hill, she sat passively, accepting the money that the boyfriend offered her, and played Quick Draw in a sort of bar room version of Solitaire.

Dating in college forced her to participate in different discourse communities from what she was accustomed to in Winnona Hill. At the same, she was conflicted, wanting to participate in the college dating scene and feeling as though she was betraying her hometown boyfriend in Winnona Hill. In describing a dating situation in college, she wrote,

> I had had a couple [of drinks] and a friend and I went upstairs to scope him out from the second floor, strange ritual we all have. Then he was standing right behind me when I was waiting for a drink. We literally bumped into each other. I said, "I know you," and he said that he knew me too. I was in his stats class. I never told him that before. Next time I was afraid to go to class because I didn't know how to act, he sat by me though and not with all of his friends. This is a big deal. He ended up instant messengering me a few times and then we hooked up the other night at the bar. Same sort of scenario. Business major none-the-less. He seems out of my league though. John [hometown boyfriend] tries to be a part of my world. Maybe that what's hard.

For Crystal, engaging in the social world of college meant rejecting the social world of Winnona Hill and vice versa. Crystal explained this conflict further in her junior year of college:

> When I'm home I fall into the settled down mode. I see all the people around my age that have families and new houses, and I'm like, that's what I want. Then I get restless and when I'm here I'm more concerned about myself and my own personal dreams. I just blow everything else off and can't even picture myself having a family with all of the things I want to do. The only people I can even fathom being with are the ones that are so out of reach.

At this point, she started dating a computer science major. He expected her to go out to dinner, attend events with his family and have "conversations on another intellectual level" than the one to which she was accustomed. She described him as "very smart" and noted that he talked

about things she couldn't always comprehend. She explained, "He's very well read. I was flattered at the fact that he was calling me and I wanting to go out with a college guy of that caliber."

Around Thanksgiving she wrote that that his parents were going to be out of town and that he had no plans

> He wants to come home with me and I think it would be fun, but I'm almost embarrassed. He's pretty easy going and stuff. It's just so new and my family has SO many issues. He comes from a small town so he knows the deal but he's so not Winnona Hill. I'm just not sure how he'll react, different sides of the tracks.

In Winnona Hill as well as her college environment, Crystal used relationships in order to gain popularity and status. According to Mandel and Shakeshaft (2000), it is often assumed that having a boyfriend affords a young woman "popularity and social status" (p. 81). Crystal had used relationships in Winnona Hill for popularity and social status, but the negotiation was different in college. She struggled to understand what it meant for her to be feminine, but also what it meant for her to be in a relationship with a middle-class, as opposed to a working-class man.

Beyond gender and class issues, Crystal was confronted with racial issues in college. Coming from a small, rural town where class lines were somewhat muted (in Crystal's perception) and the population was all White, Crystal was ill prepared to deal with race issues that impacted the college social scene. She said in a face-to-face interview in the spring of her junior year,

> I don't know how it is anywhere else, but there's a lot of issues, race issues. I mean they're not as blatant and they're more toned down because you can't be that way, you can't be forward with it. And I do feel that I had more privileges, as a White person. But now it's almost getting to the point where I feel like a minority sometimes because I know definitely in our school now there's just like a big Black movement. Like some of my

> friends couldn't talk to me if they were around other Black people because I was White. And I know I start becoming so mad about that.
>
> Crystal explained further that
>
> there was more prejudice for me in my head [in college, compared to high school.... [Some of my Black friends] had a Black ball, which is like a black tie thing, and ... I said something about like if a Black guy brought a White date. It's really like an unspoken thing. I mean, you just don't do it. And it bothers me, all of this that goes on. I didn't think prejudice and like all that was this much of an issue [growing up in Winnona Hill] as it is now.

Crystal also noted that race struggles impacted upon the club scene, "We have a Black Student Association president and they will only get rap artists to perform here. And if you're in a club and that comes on [techno], no Black people will [dance] to that." Crystal described herself as being "ignorant" to race tensions when she came to college, having little or no experience with such issues in Winnona Hill. It was hard for her to appreciate what she did not experience. "Racism" was something that they talked about in history books. She was not prepared for realizing that the racial tensions were a critical element of the college setting. Her social language practices were hampered because she had no experiences with these forms of difference and conflict.

Social Class as an Obstacle in the Academy

The form of difference that Crystal understood intimately was class. In the spring of Crystal's freshman year, just before summer vacation began, Crystal wrote and asked for my advice regarding a concert that she wanted to attend. Our Lady Peace, a musical group, was playing in Boston and she had asked a friend to go but had just received a second notice on her phone bill. "Should I go?" she asked me. "I'm so mad about this phone bill." There was a constant

struggle to fit in terms of social class and access the social opportunities that many middle-class students take for granted.

Staying in school required that Crystal be literate in the sense of negotiating the maze of forms, regulations required for college financial aid, car loans, utility bills and others. For Crystal, the struggle was more than not having money. It was also about learning to advocate for herself when her money ran out. Interestingly, the director of financial aid at the university took an interest in her. This relationship proved to be crucial for her.

In the second semester of her sophomore year, she noted,

> I work right with the head of the department since I've had so many weird cases and problems. He also said that he's going to try to get me an emergency loan through the school. He's also going to get all of my late fees waived for payment so that I may be reimbursed for them. He also asked me about work study and how that was going and I told him we were starting way too late for me to get any money and I wouldn't have a lot of hours. Then he had a conference with a lady in the back and then she worked with me and offered me a job in their office. She said he requested me to work there. I was so flattered and happy.

This relationship, not that different from her former relationships with families in Winnona Hill, proved vital, even as she struggled to negotiate a range of financial issues in college. For example, Crystal often had difficulties getting financial documents from her father as a result of his erratic lifestyle. On the director's advice, she began getting the information directly from her father's tax preparer. In talking about her job in the financial aid office a few weeks later, she said, "[the job] is going well. They help me out with my forms and problems while I'm working. They even nominated me for a scholarship that I just had to write an essay for." Into her senior year, however, she was still struggling financially. She said in our last interview,

> My dad tries but he doesn't understand. I mean, he doesn't give me any money and that makes me resentful, but I know he can't. Every little thing I had to do… like if I got sick [pause]. I know people that are living in apartment complexes. Their parents pay their rent and they pay for everything. Or if they need spending money they'll put it in their account. It's not really people with a lot of money. Their parents just do it. And I kind of hated the fact that every little thing, whether it came to filling out applications for aid or [pause]. I remember I got a speeding ticket, I had to go to court by myself.

In her sophomore year, she wrote, "I want to buy a new (95) Jetta. The kid that lives next door works at an Audi dealership that his dad owns and they have two Jettas on the lot right now. I think maybe I could swing it, but I'm so scared of the real world payment thing. But do you know how completely happy and proud I would be if I could pull that off?" A car is a critically important possession for rural adolescents. The physical distance between home and college often necessitates a car, as public transportation is often unavailable. Crystal's father could not help her, nor could anyone else in her family. She was constantly trying to imagine ways to get what other college students took for granted, and that required varied uses of language, including negotiating the maze of financial aid forms, budgeting and decisions about "swinging" a car.

By the middle of Crystal's senior year, she owed nearly $3,000 to the local hospital for two trips to the emergency room. Crystal never had insurance, and might have been eligible for some kind of federal assistance. That would assume, however, that she would know what and whom to ask about such support. If she had chosen to live in a place like Winnona Hill, there may have been people to tell her how to negotiate language activities related to financial issues. She would have had access to narratives of how to "be" in that language community. Away from Winnona Hill, she lacked the cultural capital to negotiate that way of being effectively. In the middle of her sophomore year, she reported charging braces to her credit card, believing that

braces would be a good career move into the music industry. She felt that her teeth marked her in a career field that placed value on appearances. With medical bills and the credit card debt rising, her financial situation was quite bleak.

Gaining Access: Popular Culture and the Academy

Well into Crystal's senior year of college, she became increasingly disinterested in academic literacy practices and more involved in popular culture, especially popular music. She directed me in an interview late in her junior year to read the song lyrics of a band called Our Lady Peace. The lyrics of their songs were an important source of identity construction for Crystal. Second, they infiltrated her academic language practices in that she used them as a lens through which to view more traditionally academic texts. Third, her interest in popular culture was closely tied to her desire for a career in the music industry.

In her sophomore year, Crystal reported giving a presentation on Margaret Atwood. She wrote that she used a quote from Atwood's talk on campus where she reportedly said, "You write the things you can't avoid." In our four years of correspondence, one of the things that Crystal could not avoid writing about was her love of popular music. In the spring of her junior year, Crystal shared with me the story of how she first came to see Our Lady Peace in concert with her hometown boyfriend in a city fifty miles from Winnona Hill:

> I remember we were coming home on the bus from Northtown and I listened to this CD. I was like just, I don't need you [John]. We had been having problems. I found someone that I could connect to [Raine, lead singer and songwriter for the group]. John wasn't very… I couldn't have a conversation with him. And then I saw them (Our Lady Peace) in concert and I was just like, "Wow." Then it made it easier for me to write about things. I was just so much more open to what I was thinking because for so long I just was not in touch.

She reiterated again how these texts allowed her to consider who she was in Winnona Hill and in college and who she wanted to be then and later in college. She described the lyrics as "poetry speaking to me." In an e-mail her freshman year, she wrote, "I'm just going to go and listen to my man [the band's lead singer] sing me to sleep."

In an earlier e-mail Crystal had directed me to the band's Web site and the lyrics for a song titled "Superman's Dead." I had theorized that Superman symbolized Crystal's mother. Yet in the same interview in the spring of 2000, as she prepared for her senior year of college, she corrected my interpretation, explaining that she was Superman, or rather who she used to be in Winnona Hill was Superman. She was living her mother's dream, and her grandmother, who was seriously ill at the time, was the last tangible tie to that dream. From another song by the band, she quoted a line that read, "Nobody is left in line – no one left to make you shine." She explained,

> I mean, …the big thing is like you're happy because you smile but how long can you fake it? [referring back to the first song] Like I was forever. I fooled myself that I was happy, and I wasn't. You know, like every line… like in the ordinary boy, an ordinary name, but ordinary is just not good enough today. I fit every line.

Crystal was tired of posing and understood that she was essentially alone in the world. These texts, in her belief, represented her struggle. They were a part of her lived experience.

She then told me that she spoke to the band members at a concert and gave the lead singer one of her poems. She believed that she was the protagonist in a song called "Potato Girl." She had seen the band in concert several months before the album was released and believed that the lead singer might have written the song about her. Although this was unlikely, Crystal clung to the hope that, by telling the lead singer how much his music meant to her, she had played an important role in his life, just has he did in hers. Thus, song lyrics not only gave her hope in difficult times, but provided a tie (however imagined) with a literary hero.

Through these popular texts, Crystal was experimenting with different life roles as she struggled to think of future life possibilities, including a career in the music industry, and the possibility of a relationship with someone in that field. These texts were touchstones that she came back to again and again, "rehearsing" (Bruner, 1988) with language her own possible lives (Rose, 1989). Like a little girl who watched all of the music shows with her mother many years earlier, admiring the clothes and hairstyles, Crystal used her literacy practices to rehearse the possibilities of whom and what she wanted to be in Winnona Hill and beyond. In a sense, popular music helped her to bridge the physical distance that separated Winnona Hill from her college setting.

Because he appeared to be sensitive and thoughtful, Raine seemed to disrupt Crystal's understanding of what it meant to be masculine, and, correspondingly, what it meant for her to be feminine. He was different from the construction worker who could build her a house with a two-stall garage, like Crystal's father or her former Winnona Hill boyfriend. I wondered if she would have been able to leave the relationship with her former boyfriend for something "different," without the disruption of what it meant to be "male" and therefore "female," afforded by her interest in popular music.

As her obsession with popular music texts grew, however, so did her frustration with academic expectations in the academy. The popular texts reflected who she believed she was in Winnona Hill and beyond, but the traditional texts valued in the classroom made her aware of who she was not as a working-class woman who did not have the kind of college preparation in secondary school as that of more middle-class students. In an interview the end of her junior year, she explained,

> There are things that you should have read [in high school] and you should know everything about it. Shakespeare and Blake and blah, blah, blah, blah. There's Greek mythology and like The Odyssey and like all these stereotypical like things that everybody

should know. And I don't think it's just this structure [her college] that's around the same kind of things that everybody should know and everybody should read, and they [colleges] all make you read the same things.

She paused and added, "It's almost like they expect you to be from the certain culture before they've even given you a chance to learn it." Later in the interview, she came back to this struggle:

> Some of the teachers in the department are on such a power trip that it is so hard to feel adequate. I think it's those classes that are bringing me down. I hadn't even received a grade in my Blake class and I was so intimidated I didn't even go. Then I took an in-class writing test and she gave me a B+. That is great for this teacher. She's a Nazi. I just don't like having to go to class and contribute my ideas on things. I don't really know how to explain them and feel like they're going to be totally off base. I never used to feel like that. Pretty sad for a communications and English major.

At the same time, Crystal questioned the academy and the system of rewards that she so readily bought into at Winnona Hill High School. In a face-to-face interview during the spring of her junior year, she referred me to a line from an Our Lady Peace song that talked about "falling for their lies." She connected this line to her struggle to connect to her academic assignments. Describing her college professors, she complained, "This is how you're supposed to interpret this. And this is how you're supposed to write about it. That frustrates me to no end because it's like, you know, that's not how I see it or that's not how I talk."

Just a few weeks later, she wrote of a writing assignment for what she perceived as her most difficult English class to date:

> The topic I chose has to do with how poetry is or isn't autobiographical. It either creates a life or a life creates it. I'm taking the stance that a life creates it, you have no choice. But

the examples (authors) that are motivating me to write are not ones we're talking about in class, they're all lyric writers in bands. That's how I keep relating things. I chose Keats as a poet to relate this to, but it's hard since I can't really bring it to my wavelength to understand. I've never had this problem before. I've kicked ass in English classes, but this lady is ridiculous. It's British Romanticism. She wants you to come up with these abstract ideas and then have total knowledge to back them up.

Crystal kept searching for a way to link her interest in popular culture to her academic literacy practices, especially her writing. She perceived that no space in the curriculum existed for her to link these interpretations to her writing assignments in a formal way. Her obsession with the band further depleted her financial resources as she wrote to me by e-mail her junior year, "I did another crazy thing, I put two tickets on my credit card for a millennium concert they're performing in Canada." While she could not find a way to connect these texts to her academic writing, and following the band around depleted her resources, her obsession with popular music was also having a profound impact on her emerging career goals.

During her sophomore year, she wrote, "Random thought. I want to make music videos. What kind of career goal is that?" In following Our Lady Peace and other bands of the same genre around to different venues with various friends, Crystal found herself employing a range of discourse practices. She garnered back stage passes, flirted with the guys in the bands, e-mailed managers to gain access to the band members, and scraped together enough money to pay for gas and thruway tolls. Crystal saw these bands and their managers as giving her access to the music scene, and potentially an internship. One manager advised her to try out to be a "campus rep for SONY," but the head of the communications department disagreed, warning her that such a job was only a "go-fer" type position and a dead end. Yet for Crystal these managers, whom she

described as "sleazy," represented her access to a life and career connected to the music industry. She explained,

> I'm talking to a couple of different managers now. Hopefully, they can get me somewhere. I also know Flame [a DJ at a local radio station] and so I'm going to try to get an internship there this summer. Or maybe I should try for something bigger along the lines of these managers.

By summer, Crystal confirmed that both options had failed to help her get an internship. She was back working at a restaurant in Winnona Hill in the early summer and later at a pool supply store near college where an aunt knew someone who helped her get a job.

Time was running out for Crystal as she approached graduation and the finish line of the marathon without a clear sense of where she might go from there. In an interview during her senior year, she said,

> I talked to the head of the department last semester and he said, for what you want to do I want to get you an internship in a year and half in New York City or somewhere. So I'm thinking about going to Chicago for the summer because I have relatives there. But it's just like a whole circle where I don't have a reliable car to get anywhere. I don't have the money to get to or live in Chicago. But in the internships, like most of the time you have to pay for the credits to be able to take internships like through the school.

She explained also that she did not want a career in the music business as a means of attaining fame, "but working with those people [musicians]. It's public relations, but a lot of it is journalism. Like you do a lot of interviews and you organize their [musicians] lives." Yet Crystal wondered if this kind of life was possible, saying, "Like I don't think that someone like me is going to be able to go and just work for like a record company and they're just going to put me out there."

Crystal's private literacies did not command the cultural capital in the academy that Chris' seemed to. Chris was a reader of great speeches. Crystal read lyrics and connected them to her own life and struggles. Crystal left Winnona Hill wanting what she perceived as the "ordinary" in the form of a house with a two-stall garage and a family. As a working-class woman, she was not connected to the language community that could likely get her an internship, a car, a place to stay and money to pay for the credits to register for the internships. Four years later, she used ordinary, popular texts to try to imagine a life that was, for her, quite extraordinary.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to address two broad research questions: (1) What did it mean for these two informants to grow up in an impoverished, rural community and school and to become "literate enough" to go to college? (2) How did these teenagers develop and employ the multiple literacies necessary to cross into understandings, experiences, careers and life roles outside of the rural setting? To that end, the first section of this chapter will review the relative importance of research focused on rural adolescents as well as the limitations of this particular study. The second section will summarize the major findings of this study and provide a cross-case analysis of the language practices that Chris and Crystal employed in and beyond Winnona Hill. Third, the chapter will provide implications for practices and policy, as well as discuss a number of questions raised by the study.

Rural Adolescents and Ways of Being

In a chapter titled Run Through the Borders: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Runaway Subjectivity, Chang (1997) discussed the writing and life of Evelyn Lau, an academically gifted teenage runaway from Vancouver, Canada. Chang described Lau's subjectivity in relation to place. Lau was both an insider and an outsider in Vancouver as a female, Asian runaway. The person and the place, according to Chang, had a "dynamic, participatory and antagonistic relationship" (p. 171). Yet when Lau left Vancouver for other places, she was drawn back in a nagging and persistent way to this home where she was sometimes not home at all. Similarly, Chris and Crystal were insiders and outsiders both in Winnona Hill and in their college settings. Using a range of language practices, the two informants worked towards inclusion in both social worlds. Place mattered for Chris and Crystal, and the language practices needed to "fit" in high school, as opposed to college, were quite different. Hence, this study raises important issues in

terms of curriculum and support systems for rural adolescents who often bring to college campus different experiences than their suburban or urban counterparts.

There is much at stake in terms of the transition from high school to higher education, especially for rural and other impoverished students as economic shifts occur in their communities. What might be the implications for literacy learning for White males like Chris, who will not likely find work on the farms or in the factories or mills like their fathers before them? What might be the implications for a White female like Crystal, who might have once dreamed of being a woman of the house married to the farm or mill worker? How do these young men and women negotiate the conflicting life narratives and notions of possible lives in different discourse communities? What will it mean to "learn to labor" (Willis, 1977) in rural and even urban regions of the United States, where economic power is shifting? What will it mean to learn a living versus earning a living for rural adolescents who may find it difficult to access continued education in their home communities? What are the possibilities for and within a locally relevant curriculum that account for issues of race, class, gender, place and cultural capital in and outside of schooling (Luke, 1995/96; Laureau, 1999)?

Limitations

My initial analysis of "crossing" held many preconceptions that I did not appreciate when I began this study four years ago. With standards and high-stakes testing engulfing New York and other states, I was compelled to understand the literacy practices of adolescents that could not be captured by high-stakes testing. While I came to understand more deeply the literacy practices that Chris and Crystal employed to negotiate social worlds in and out of Winnona Hill, I needed to acknowledge my subjectivity as a former high school teacher in a rural school as well as a former rural adolescent.

As a teacher, I worried about the implications for practice for and with adolescents in light of policies favoring testing. Would the multiple literacies demonstrated in a financial aid office, campus bar, on a computer screen, or playing Quick Draw in the local tavern "count," and if not, how could I capture what is not counted? Mindful of my original intent not to "surf" for that which is dramatic or shocking, I suspected that I would find rich data to describe Chris and Crystal's language practices. There was a line from the movie "Hoosiers" where the English teacher remarked that she "used to play in those fields. I wanted to walk across the fields and keep on walking." I wanted Chris to "walk" across those fields to get "out" without any sense of what he would lose: his relationship with Ron, his comfort among the trees, his relationship with his family and, at least for a time, his chameleon-like skin. As a working-class woman, I wanted the same for Crystal. I did not want her to rely on a man who was not around, or for her to struggle as her mother did with little room for herself or the things she enjoyed. By wanting her to pursue higher education, I thought I was protecting her.

While I was aware of the fact that all research is driven by agendas, I am now more aware of my multiple agendas and multiple positionings in this study. As a White, working-class, first-generation college woman who was raised in a rural environment and had successfully "crossed," somewhere deep in my consciousness, I still did know what these particular young people stood to lose. It soon became clear that this was "my take" on these informants' experiences. At the same time, I had to square up to a number of my own biases, shaped by my working-class notion that to "cross" is somehow to "reject" (Rodriguez, 1983). And yet, I believed that, in Kingsolver's words, "the crossing" would be "worth the storm." In my own biographical narrative, I was the English teacher from "Hoosiers" pushing "my Jimmys" out the door and away from the cornfields and Friday night games.

It should also be noted that while the data were gathered over a four-year period, I did not directly experience the social worlds of the informants by way of participant observation. I was not present when Chris was supposedly using his coded alphabet to impress a "hot girl" in his college class or when Crystal was engaging in the conversation in the residence hall about people having to dress in Polo attire. While my subjectivity as researcher, former teacher and confidante problematized this study, it gave me a particular access to data that I may have never seen, had I been a disinterested or casual observer. Despite the limitations of this study, a number of important findings are worth consideration.

Summary of Findings

Each data chapter began with what I thought I knew about Chris and Crystal's lives and literacies as a result of our interactions in and around Winnona Hill. What I saw in Chris was an openly resistant student who refused to engage in my reading/writing workshop and relished the use of profanity in school. Unlike Crystal, he was largely excluded from the popular crowd. Crystal, on the other hand, fit in with the popular social cliques and was generally compliant in terms of academic literacy practices. While her popular status made her appear as if she had everything together, my experiences with her in athletic contexts told me that she struggled after her mother's death.

There was much that I did not know about these young people's language practices, despite teaching and coaching them for several years. I did not, for example, appreciate how Chris' and Crystal's family members shaped their literacy development. Chris used a range of texts, from books given to him by his sisters to stories that he wrote in small spiral notebooks, to imagine a life outside of Winnona Hill. Although Crystal reported that her grandmother did "educational things" with her, her home language practices were not as aligned with school-like language practices as compared to Chris. Chris "looked inside with paper and colored pencils" and

wrote stories in pocket notebooks, while Crystal's home literacies revolved around popular texts in the form of music. In school, Crystal "raced" to be literate enough to get out of Winnona Hill, and yet she reported that she struggled with the competing institutional voices that told her how she should be as a woman of the house as opposed to a middle-class professional woman.

For Crystal, becoming "literate enough" to go to college meant having a grandmother who taught her to read, but also a mother who told her she was smart enough to rule the world and who watched music awards shows with her. Other than the "educational" tasks that her grandmother engaged in with her, Crystal's private literacy practices did not align with more academic literacy practices and what Gee (2000) has referred to as "achievement spaces." These achievement-oriented language practices were, for Crystal, largely confined to school. In school, she "raced" to stay ahead of her middle-class peers, aligning with them and their families after her mother's death. After her mother's death, the competing narratives of being a woman of the house, like her mother and grandmother, conflicted with the narrative of successful women that she saw in the mothers of her middle-class peers.

Crystal gained power and access to social cliques by posing as middle class in order to gain an understanding of lives beyond her "hard-living" (Rubin, 1992), working-class family. To do this, she said she "paid ahead" in the school lunch line and worked hard in her academic classes in order to gain access to the upper tracks in math and science. She worked to balance a number of roles, including a pseudo-maternal role, in order to continue to "fit" with this peer group that gave her access to possible lives beyond her own working-class family. Crystal associated with these "labeled smart kids," but understood that she was not really one of them and came to believe that she was not smart; she "just worked hard." As such, she had to be the kind of girl that others wanted to care for. Aligning with middle-class families and co-opting some of the literacy practices, caused further dissonance between her socially-constructed dream to marry a

construction worker who could build her a house and the dream of a college education. And so she compromised, enrolling in a degree program that would allow her to get a middle-class job, yet have a family and stay in Winnona Hill.

Into late adolescence, Chris learned to function as a discourse chameleon, blending with the social landscape to survive life among the "Cro-Magnums." The ability to adapt his speech to relate funny stories and form symbiotic relationships with other males who would protect him was shaped by a range of literacy practices that were mostly private in nature. Influenced by his "reading marathon of eleven years," he and Ron created characterizations and plots for the touchstone text of the "Game," which allowed the boys to imagine how they might "be" and "best" the "Cro-Magnums." The "Game" allowed him and Ron to imagine ways of being powerful and how to carry the characterizations, settings and plots that they developed in their social worlds, and then to bring their social worlds into the "Game" itself. He once avoided a fight on a beach with another male because Ron reminded him that Erestor, who was a character in the "Game," would likely not fight in such a circumstance. At the same time, the "Game" reflected the adolescent's social world in Winnona Hill by way of characters who grew large quantities of marijuana. Fitting into the party scene of Winnona Hill allowed him and Ron to "fit" with the "Cro-Magnums." His earlier discourse practice of perching under a desk in a classroom to make the big guys laugh was replaced by "busting balls and guzzling beers" to fit with the dominant social construction of masculinity and gain power. Chris originally enrolled in college as an art major.

In order to cross into new understandings of careers, life roles and educational experiences outside of the rural setting, Chris relied heavily on private language practices. Much of his literate life was outside of the sanctioned curriculum of his secondary and postsecondary education settings. Chris wrote in his journals in order to explore issues of masculinity and power in

Winnona Hill as well as issues of social class and race in college. It was also in these private spaces that Chris negotiated, in coded Cyrillic alphabet, who he believed he was in terms of religious and other beliefs. Over a period of four years, these private literacies supported him during his most difficult and trying times. At the same time, Chris struggled to gain competence, participating in class discussions and with forms of assessment necessary for him to successfully complete his academic requirements.

As Crystal crossed into the academy and different understandings of life roles, careers and life possibilities, she described herself as not especially prepared for college, despite having good high school grades and a smooth academic transition to college in her first year. For Crystal, a number of social language practices were important, including the discourse practices of the club and dating scenes, electronic communication, and the literacies needed to find resources to stay in school, as well as those language practices needed to imagine a career path in the music industry.

Into her junior and senior year of college, Crystal relied heavily on popular texts in the form of music lyrics, and in particular one band called Our Lady Peace. She used these texts to make sense of her life and to pursue her ongoing "identity work" (Gee, 2000). In addition, she used these popular texts as a lens through which to view academic texts and to imagine possible career paths. Crystal looked for a way to connect her academic learning to these popular culture texts and to her interest in the music industry. Yet the time that she spent engaged in these non-academic language practices distracted her from her academic studies and even depleted her already limited financial resources.

Unlike Crystal, Chris did not fit academically or socially during the first few months in college. He struggled to find "comrades" and spent both his freshman and sophomore years on academic probation. His teachers did not recognize him, and because his classes did not require papers, his "voice was silent." Without participating in class, he drew naked women and

questioned his identity away from the "trees." In Winnona Hill, surrounded by trees and "Cro-Magnums," Chris knew what it meant for him to be masculine. In high school, he offered drunken speeches to entertain the kings. By contrast, in college, he watched soap operas and television dramas with female friends.

Some texts traveled across the boundaries between home and college for Crystal and Chris, while others did not. Chris grieved the loss of home and, in particular, his relationship with Ron. As children and adolescents in Winnona Hill, they had created whole worlds. Now Chris felt that he was no longer a part of those worlds in Winnona Hill or the "Game." To bridge the distance between college and her social worlds, Crystal used electronic communication. E-mail linked her with the music scene by way of conversations with the managers of locally- and nationally-known bands. It was through these correspondences that she hoped to access an internship or find some other way to enter the music industry. Crystal was conceiving of ways to use language in electronic spaces, and perhaps even posing in these spaces, to gain access to a career.

At the conclusion of this study, Chris had an even less developed understanding of what he might do to make a living with an English degree than Crystal, even though she still could not figure out how to get an internship without money or connections. Chris set the kind of academic or intellectual work that he did in college or in his more academic work-study job in opposition to what his father did in the mill. Hence, he placed himself in opposition to what White, working-class males are supposed to be and do.

Both informants used multiple literacies and a range of language practices to become "literate enough" to gain access to college as well as to cross into life roles, careers and possibilities beyond the rural community. Both informants' language practices shaped and were shaped by "ways of being" (Gee, 2000) and dominant social constructions of social class, masculinity, femininity, Whiteness and work. During the time between their senior years in high

school and their senior years in college, Chris and Crystal used these language practices to negotiate the social, cultural, political and intellectual worlds in and between their rural community and college. In sum, both of these informants learned to pose in order to "fit" into oppressive social structures in Winnona Hill. And yet these language and discourse practices did not necessarily support their "crossing" to higher education. In some instances, the coping mechanisms that they developed were counterproductive to their success in college.

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this section is to consider the findings of this study in terms of implications for practice in secondary and postsecondary settings. One implication is that we must offer rural adolescents access to narratives of crossing. Second, we must model a range of language practices for and with rural adolescents as both Crystal and Chris employed a variety of practices to make sense of themselves and their social worlds. Third, we must engage in serious conversations about a continuum of expectation and related communication from the secondary to the postsecondary levels.

Narratives of Crossing

One implication is that we should offer rural adolescents narratives of crossing and attempt to sensitize them to forms of difference found in their rural communities and beyond. In the high-school English classroom, this means selecting literature and providing writing opportunities that allow rural adolescents to grapple with a host of life possibilities beyond "the norm" in an isolated community like Winnona Hill. We might offer them access to fiction and nonfiction texts that present alternatives to the dominant social constructions of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and place found in their home communities.

This also means that we might engage students in conversations and writings in what Hynds (1997) has called a "critical multiculturalism," where students construct and then

reconstruct understandings of inequalities in the larger social world. In turn, young people like Chris and Crystal may be able to better question and wonder about issues that are oppressive to them or might, in time, be oppressive to them in and beyond their homes. We might begin by giving them the resources to question stereotypes about rural people as rednecks, "Cro-Magnum" males as dominant and females as women of the house.

And while we sensitize them to forms of difference, we need to do this cautiously. To assume that rural adolescents, who have had little or no experience outside of their mostly White communities, can engage critically with issues such as race, may not make sense in light of their experiences. If, for example, a student like Chris made a comment in a class discussion that Black and White people were like "beagles and basset hounds," do we publicly criticize him, pushing those thoughts further underground? And if we do not publicly criticize him, are we reinforcing his prejudice? Hence, we must challenge ourselves as teachers and school leaders to have difficult conversations with adolescents, some who have wide experiences with difference, and others, by virtue of their rural isolation, do not have such experiences. To support their understandings of larger social inequities, we might also engage them in reading, writing, speaking and listening about forms of difference that they understand and appreciate, while moving them consistently towards what they have not directly experienced.

At the same time, we should consider the complexities of such exploration. We must think carefully about the potential for such exploration to violate their coping strategies and ways of surviving the complex social world of a high school. For example, we must help Crystal appreciate how social class shapes all our understandings, without essentializing her or embarrassing her. We also know from Chris' reports that he could not have engaged in a classroom conversation about masculinity and power in school. He would not have felt safe. Thus, as we invite students into such exploration, we need to acknowledge and carefully consider what

they risk by participating. Hynds (1997) used the term "critical radar" to describe what teachers must develop for detecting inequities in the social world of schools, and added that teachers and schools must "oppose bigotry in all of its forms, while still caring for our students who have fallen victim to its invidious appeal" (p. 270). This will be a tremendous challenge, but one that we must embrace.

Offering narratives of crossing in the English Language Arts classroom also implies preparing rural adolescents for the forms of difference that they may encounter beyond their home communities, but also for the way the academy works. Thus, the narratives of crossing that might be most helpful for rural adolescents might be inviting former students back into school to talk about their experiences, their majors, their courses and what they hope to do for a career. We might engage rural students in exploration around careers and explicitly help them see the link between academic learning and career and life goals, which are often beyond what they see every day in their communities. Yet even in this exploration we need to be sensitive to place. Might it for example, have been better for the long-term viability of the rural community for someone like Crystal to become a social worker? A career in the music industry would likely necessitate that she leave Winnona Hill. Career education might best support rural students if it is locally-situated and acknowledges the tradeoffs of selecting a career that would more than likely mean that they would leave home, as compared to a career that might allow the adolescent to stay in the home community.

Offering students narratives of crossing will also mean helping them develop strategies for accessing support once they get to college. For example, we might model a conversation with a financial aid counselor. We might model how to construct a conversation with a professor during office hours to get additional help understanding course content. We might work to support

working-class and poor students as they learn to advocate for themselves in ways that do not conflict with deep-seeded cultural values of independence and pride.

After we have helped adolescents have rich and varied understandings of possible lives outside and inside the rural community, we must be certain that they are prepared for the academic challenges of the academy. Rural schools may need to collaborate with community colleges or other schools to share advanced placement or credit-bearing courses that would extend the preparation already afforded them in high school. And then it is important to engage our local stakeholders in these discussions about achievement in rural schools and communities. How can rural educators engage community members in discussions about increasing the percentages of rural students who can successfully "cross" to college, without making them fearful that their sons and daughters will leave and never return? While we must not assume that everyone must go to college, we must help rural adolescents understand the economic realities of their communities and appreciate what continued learning may offer them now and in the future.

Multiple Literacies and Critical Literacies

A second implication of this study is that secondary educators must consider the range of literacy practices that adolescents engage in as they negotiate life in and out of their educational settings. Mainstream and non-mainstream language practices supported Chris and Crystal in personal ways as they engaged in ongoing "identity work" (Gee, 2000), but also in academic senses as the private language practices spilled over into academic contexts. As Chris characterized himself as an adolescent "made himself among the trees," place mattered in terms of his uses of language to construct identity, as did his understanding of forms of difference and different social worlds. When confronted with these conflicting notions, Chris used his private language practices to make sense of his own identity, as well as his position in larger social

worlds. Crystal relied heavily on her popular literacies that were not validated in the academic program of the university.

Learning about worlds "beyond their worlds" in and around Winnona Hill was critical for Crystal and Chris, and likely so for many adolescents. In order to accomplish this, we might consider ways that the curriculum can account for issues important on a local level. What mattered for Chris would be quite different for what mattered for a young man of Latino heritage growing up in an urban or rural area. Perhaps largely because he was from a rural community, what mattered for Chris were his private spaces. For the same token, considering her distance from the mainstream of popular culture, what mattered for Crystal were popular texts. Hence, there is a balance that we might consider between what matters to students on an individual level and what matters in the larger social worlds of rural adolescents. In Winnona Hill, we supported Chris' learning to write papers, but we did not support his learning about how race, class, gender, and sexual orientation shapes people's understandings in complex ways. To accomplish such a goal, we may need to include a range of texts in the classroom and model a range of literacies, private and public, for and with students.

I had not, until I conducted this study, understood the impact of popular texts on Cyrstal's understanding of her social worlds and how she tried to use them as a lens through which to look at other more academic literature. And yet, it may be problematic to endorse the inclusion of these texts and thus afford them unquestioned privilege in secondary classrooms. We might consider, however, ways that the curriculum may reflect the multiple literacies that adolescents' employ and, hence, the inclusion of a range of texts from the popular to the traditional to the practical. Might it be helpful for students like Crystal to use financial aid forms as non-fiction texts in the English Language Arts classroom? How might we balance the use of such non-fiction texts with the kinds of traditional texts that she felt she should have read in high school, but did not?

One might also argue, for example, that popular texts are intruding for students like Crystal anyway, and that we should harness the potential that exists in using popular culture to help adolescents engage in critical literacy activities (Alvermann, Hagood & Moon, 2000). While that may be true, we need to carefully consider what affording these texts in the secondary classroom may mean for teachers, their students and schools as organizations. What, for example are we willing to give up in the curriculum in order to include these texts? We might also need to challenge ourselves as teachers and school leaders to have difficult conversations with our students about what types of popular texts are appropriate for school and what types of popular texts might not be appropriate for school. How might we, for example, engage students in activities that allow them to consider how and why some popular texts might be offensive as a critical literacy activity? A related consideration is the continuum of inclusion of such texts. If we privilege these texts in the secondary English Language Arts classroom, will they be privileged in the postsecondary classroom? This leads to the third implication of this study, both for policy and practice.

A Continuum of Expectation and Communication

The third implication for practice and policy would be a call for collaboration between higher education and the K-12 community. Both Chris and Crystal struggled understanding how to succeed in higher education settings. If we are committed to supporting students like Chris and Crystal, higher education and the K-12 school leaders and teachers might engage in serious conversations about what matters in the academy and then what matters in the secondary setting.

That is not to suggest that I am privileging the curriculum of the academy over the secondary schools, but that what one must support the other, and that teachers and leaders in both organizations can benefit from a deeper understanding of both contexts. There must be a continuum of expectations and communication. For example, does an English Language Arts

classroom that always offers choice in the form of response menus work against preparing students like Chris for the academy where choices may or may not be allowed?.

Likewise, trying to create options that appeal to different groups, such as the boys versus the girls, might be problematic in the classroom. Newkirk (2000) has argued, for example, that boys become the "natives" to be converted to more socially responsible preferences in the English Language Arts classroom and that reviewing resistance to certain classroom practices as "pathological" is troubling. Yet did my offering Chris "choices" and my not treating Chris' refusal to engage in certain classroom procedures as pathologies help him in adjusting to the curriculum of the academy? Instruction should be explicit for adolescents in terms of the kinds of requirements that they will face in a college English classroom.

If colleges require multiple drafts and proofreading sessions, then secondary schools that hope to support students "crossing" should value such practices as well. If, for example, colleges do want students to be able to competently engage in a curriculum that focuses on writing process, the English Language Arts classrooms that are using skill and drill approach may be further handicapping rural students who are already less likely to make the transition to higher education.

Another example for the importance of such secondary and postsecondary alignment was found in Crystal's case. She, for example, did not know that she could go to the college library and get literary criticism for standard selections from the traditional cannon. She did not know that she could use such expert opinion to construct that "total knowledge" she perceived was valued by her English professor to back up her interpretations. Whether teaching students to rely on literary criticism is good pedagogy is another question altogether. The point remains that we need to have serious discussions around what is important at the secondary and postsecondary levels. In turn, we need to better align the curriculum in terms of content and process in the secondary schools.

We need to consider experiences, academic and social, that help Crystal and Chris bridge the worlds of high school and college.

Questions Raised By the Study

For Chris, it is the writing and rewriting of mostly private texts that shaped his understandings of who he was in and beyond Winnona Hill. Using private literacies, he developed counterplots of dominant masculinities, race and class. Do all adolescents develop these private literacies if they are not modeled in a school setting? What do we need to know about how students use private literacies, to make sense of their worlds? At what point are we violating private literacies and do not need to know about them? Will teachers and schools make space, now and in the future, for private literacies and related exploratory language practices in a shift to high-stakes testing and accountability in the form of standardized tests?

And Crystal's case points to some areas for questions in terms of popular culture and adolescents literacies. How will popular culture be accessed by way of cable or satellite television or the Internet transcend the distance that previously isolated rural students? Will rural students be prepared to sift through the kinds of derogatory and even hateful texts that can be found on the Internet or in other forms of media, having had little personal experience with people who are different from them in terms of race and ethnicity? How will such texts shape the understandings of rural adolescents of their worlds as well as the worlds beyond their rural confines? Is it the responsibility of schools to monitor the language activities of students outside of school?

If we do decide that schools have a responsibility to support adolescents' under-standings of how electronic communication impacts and is impacted by their social worlds, there are other questions that emerge. For example, what are the pedagogical implications for the kinds of electronic communications that adolescents deal with each day? Further research on adolescents'

sense making in and around texts that they encounter on the Internet, in e-mail, by Instant Messaging will allow us to think more critically about these issues.

In addition, research is needed on critical pedagogies in schools. Studies such as Young's (2000), which focused on adolescent boys' engagement with critical literacy activities in a home schooling context, were important to the emerging understanding of critical pedagogies. We now need to understand how adolescents and their teachers engage in such critical practices in the social worlds of public schools in rural, urban and suburban settings.

While many would argue that it is impossible to find a typical adolescent or school, perhaps research focused on the beliefs and practices of certain kinds of adolescents in certain educational settings can help us understand the range of adolescents' literacies and the borders that students and their teachers negotiate each day. As we consider these diverse perspectives, perhaps we can also conceive of research, practice and policy that moves us towards a more equitable world for all adolescents, and the inclusion of young people like Chris and Crystal in developing and sustaining such a world.

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Figure 1

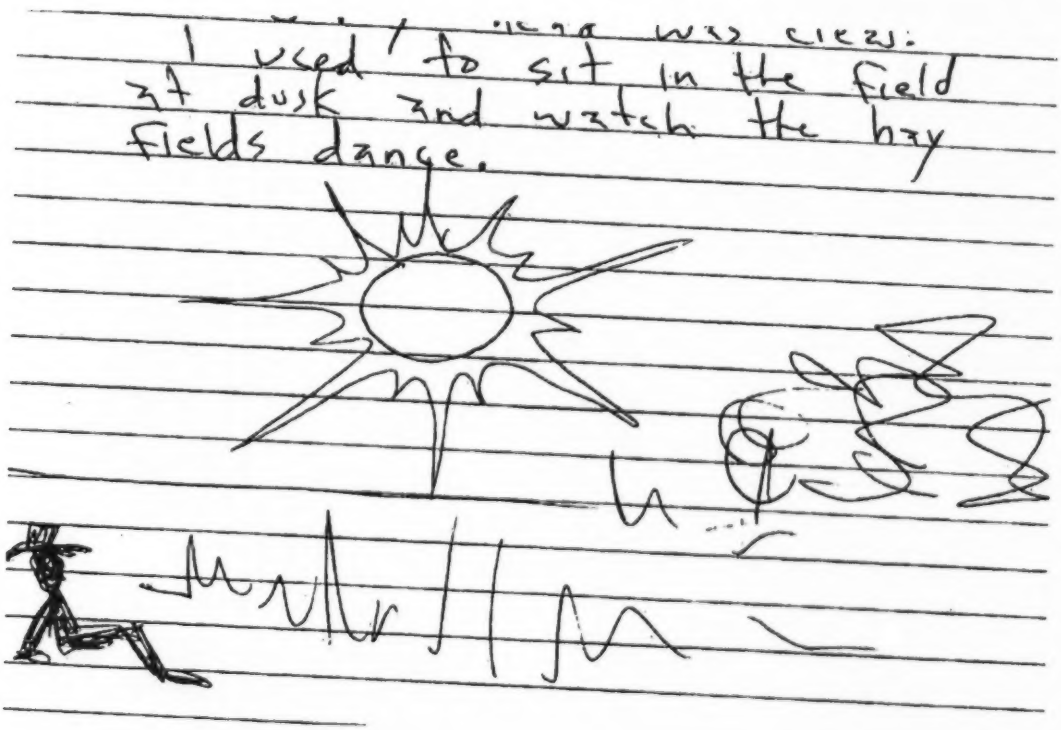

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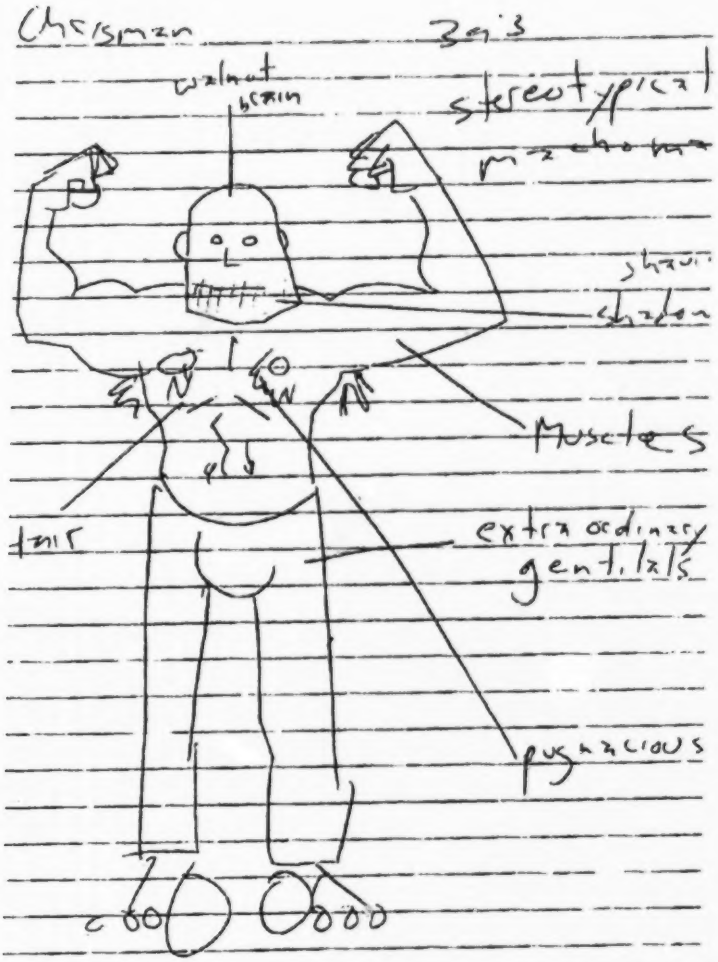
Figure 2



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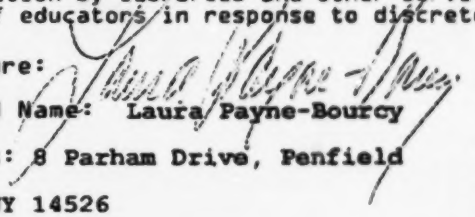
Signature: 

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